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The document was circulated last in September 2024 under the title NATIONS OF THE WORLD. It has been renamed to A TOUR OF THE WORLD. In the past six months, the document has been reviewed in terms of contents and layout. Obvious mistakes have been mostly removed but the work on the format continues.

The book is particularly intended for use by students preparing for interviews and tests. The books on the subject are mostly devoted to flags of nations, cuisine and tourism. Being commercial in outlook, the writers and the media sell the information in bits and pieces. This effort is intended to share knowledge without expecting anything in return.

The responses to this compilation are expected to vary from person to person. A recipient may be content merely with casting a cursory glance on the contents; a step further, some people might read the entire book with full attention, and a selected few could build up on this information and expand its scope. We respect your choice of the way you choose to handle the book.

A TOUR OF THE WORLD

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(Last update 20 March 2025)

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PREFACE

The world may have different divisions like geographical, geological or political. This compilation is devoted to political division of the world.

In its distorted perspective, *politics* is viewed as some evil manipulation to make personal gains. Literally however, the term is derived from *polity*, which has Greek origin, and means *society*. Politics is a healthy activity related to functioning of societies. In formal terms, the world is politically divided into nation-states.

A nation-state is a country where a group of people share a common identity and live in a territory with established borders. Sovereignty, land, population and government

are the four characteristics of a nation-state. The oldest nation-state of the world is San Marino, founded more than 17 centuries ago. Currently, there are some 197 nation-states in the world; Australia, China and Egypt being some examples.

Information about the world in varying degrees is needed more in fields like international relations, national security and economic planning. Correct understanding of geopolitical, social and monetary landscapes of other nations is needed for informed decision-making in areas including diplomacy, conflict resolution and climate change. The national security managers gather intelligence on capabilities and intentions of the adversary for an accurate threat perception and formulation of pragmatic defence strategies. Information on economies of international partners is vital to formulate financial policies and foster mutual trade.

Till recent past, human dealings were mostly restricted within national boundaries, and a common man could operate smoothly in life on the basis of his knowledge of the local environments. Due to enhancement in telecommunication and physical movement of people to foreign destinations, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected by the day. The emerging global village necessitates some awareness level for the common man too. It fosters understanding, broadens horizons and facilitates communication across borders. In its absence, there are major practical difficulties in managing life, and, even routine matters like booking of flights become difficult if not impossible.

This compilation provides with a mere familiarisation with the world and some of the contents will need updating on regular basis. The information being general in nature may not be appropriate enough for research work.

PROLOGUE

Human capacity to learn is limited. Nowadays too much information is available and there is a temptation to learn everything. The result is learning little. The art now is to decide not what to learn but what not to learn. The scope of the subject must be curtailed to comfortable human parameters. Secondly, correct priority must be accorded to the contents so that the readers learn quality information with minimum effort. The writers can guide the readers in what to read and to what extent.

This book is mostly devoted to independent political entities of the world. Some nations possess overseas territories. Most of these provide military bases, ports, airports, raw materials and manpower to the mother nations. These have been discussed separately to highlight their importance.

Some summaries of data are also included in the book for comparison of nations in vital aspects. These include the dimensions like area, population and currency.

A major part of the book is devoted to organisations engaged in collective management of the world. Their number runs into hundreds. Some of these relate to special subjects and information about them is not essential to a common reader. One such example is the fisheries organisations. Therefore, while most organisations are listed, details on all are not included. Less known but vital organisations have been accorded priority.

Currently 193 nations are direct UN members but there are four more. Vatican City is a microstate represented through Italy; Taiwan membership is blocked by China and Kosovo by the Orthodox bloc in general and Serbia in particular. Palestine is denied membership due to objections from Israel. Israel itself is not recognised by majority of the Muslim world but is a UN member.

The information on each **NATION** starts with its **Formal** name followed by **Demonym**; an expression identifying resident or native of a place. It is a recently minted term and is capitalized. Examples are Chinese, British, and American. A highly educated Egyptian referred to Pakistanis as Pakistananians and sounded odd. The knowledge of Demonym is vital to preclude social embarrassment, if for no other reason.

Location of each nation is covered in maximum detail to help develop a physical picture of each nation in relation to its neighbouring countries. The name of the **Capital** city of each nation is placed at the end of location.

Population is so important that some entire books are based on it. One such example is **The Next Hundred Years** by George Friedman written in 2009. It is devoted to predictions about the 21st century and its major conclusions are based on relative population of countries. Being important, population is thus included but the figures are generously rounded off as the aim behind this compilation is restricted merely to broad awareness.

The information on **Area** of each nation is important to gauge relative size of countries. Population density is also covered in most cases. In this book, all areas are in square kilometres and the population density in per square kilometre.

The information about **Ethnic groups**, **Language** and **Religion** is given at one place. Only major religions and languages are accounted for.

Next comes the brief geography of each nation followed by its history. Subsequently, Economy including Currency of each nation is covered in length commensurate with its standing in the world.

Generally, the last item in this part is the intergovernmental organisations a country may be member of.

Some peculiarities of each nation are also covered if applicable.

The information may not necessarily be in a uniform sequence for all nations.

The segment on overseas **TERRITORIES** of nations is brief and restricted to their striking features only.

The information on **INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS** is restricted to basic information only considered vital to familiarisation with the subject.

In this compilation, more importance has been attached to overall picture of the world. Ordinary details about bigger nations are omitted to generate more space for smaller ones; simple terms have been used to preclude use of dictionary; all efforts have been made to convey information lightly, and mostly one thing is taken at a time to make learning easy.

The word dollar in the text means US dollar.

No maps are included as they make the compilation cumbersome.

Based on experience with kids, a key has been introduced as an aid to learning names of all nations. Readers can devise their own techniques to memorise what they consider important.

This compilation spans some 280 with number of words in excess of 110,000. The world average reading speed is 300 words per minute. 100 words per minute should be comfortable reading. A continuous reading of this book thus requires a maximum of 20 hours. With two hours of study per day, it is thus possible to finish the book in 10 odd days; two weeks study with rest on long weekends.

As similar information is repeated for 197 nations of the world, there is hardly a need to read all pages in detail at initial stages. In the beginning, a cursory glance at the contents should suffice. Gradually, more time can be devoted to the parts found more relevant by the reader.

Last but not least, there is no intention to print this book. The information mostly requires constant updating and improvement. Each reader can tailor the contents to his own taste.

LIST OF NATIONS

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan,

The Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi,

Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, (Republic of) Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic,

Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, DR Congo, East Timor, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France,

Gabon, The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan,

Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea N, Korea S, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman,

Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Rwanda,

Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria,

Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu,

Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vatican City, Venezuela, Vietnam, Western Samoa,

Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

NATIONS

AFGHANISTAN

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Demonym Afghan) with capital Kabul is a country that lies in a region which is considered part of South Asia, Central Asia and also Western Asia. It is a landlocked country, bordered by Pakistan to the east and south; Iran to the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north; and China to the northeast as a distant neighbour.

The population of Afghanistan is 43 million in an area of 652,867 square kilometres. Its ethnic groups include 42% Pashtun, 27% Tajik, and 9% each of Hazara and Uzbek. Pashtu and Dari are the major languages in Afghanistan. Almost 100 % Afghans adhere to Islamic religion.

Afghanistan is generally a mountainous country with plains in the north and the southwest. It has rich natural deposits including coal, copper, emerald and salt. Its mineral resources alone are worth one trillion dollars. However, its rough geography, landlocked status and internal conflict hinder progress.

Human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to at least 50,000 years. The country is strategically located along the Silk Route, also called Silk Road. The Route comprises a series of trade and cultural routes. Since long, these have been linking traders, pilgrims, soldiers, nomads and urban dwellers from China to the Mediterranean Sea. Afghanistan has witnessed numerous military campaigners including Alexander, the Great; Muslims; British, Soviets and the West. Finally, it became independent in 1747. Currently, there are more than three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

Afghani is the currency in use in Afghanistan. Its per capita income is 422 dollars and it falls among the least developed countries in the world. The UN is among its donors. In the recent past, its 5 million expatriates returned home bringing money and skills. Its imports are worth 7 billion dollars, and exports, 780 million dollars. Its services constitute 56 %, agriculture 23 % and industry 21 % of the economy. Fruits, nuts, opium and cannibals are produced in Afghanistan.

ALBANIA

The Republic of Albania (Demonym Albanian) with capital Tirana is a country in South-eastern Europe on Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered by Montenegro to the northwest; Serbia and Kosovo to the northeast; North Macedonia to the east and Greece to the south and east. Albania is less than 72 kilometres from Italy, across the Strait of Otranto which links the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea. Albania has coastlines on Adriatic Sea in the west and Ionian Sea in the south west. .

Albania has a population of 3 million in an area of 28,748 square kilometres. Albanian and Greek are the languages spoken in the country. 80% of the population adheres to Islam and 18 % to Christianity.

The country displays a varied range of geological, hydrological and morphological conditions. The landscapes in Albania range from rugged snow-capped mountains in the Albanian Alps to the fertile lowland plains along the Adriatic and Ionian seas.

Historically, Albania has been inhabited by Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilisations. Ottomans ruled the region from the early 15th to the early 20th century. The present nation state of Albania declared independence in 1912. In the 20th century, the Kingdom of Albania became part of Nazi Germany. After the Second World War, it came under communist rulers. The revolution of 1991 ended communism and currently, it is a unitary republic. The Muslims of Albanian origin constitute majority population in the neighbouring Kosovo as well.

Lek is the currency in use in the country. Albania is a developing country with upper middle class economy dominated by service sector followed by manufacturing. Tirana and Durres are the economic and the financial hearts of Albania due to their population, infrastructure and strategic geographical locations.

Fruits, vegetables, sugar beets, tobacco, honey, dairy, medicinal plants and aromatic plants are grown in Albania. Fishing too has potential for export, not yet explored. Electronics, manufacturing, textiles, food and cement mining are the vital elements of the economy. Albania produces chromium, nickel and coal. The textile industry has expanded due to the companies of the EU being operative in Albania and it fetches close to 1.5 billion euros per annum. Albania has the second largest oil deposits in Balkan Peninsula after Romania. Its coastline and history attract tourists. Telecom too is a major contributor to the economy. The per capita income in Albania is 8924 dollars its trading partners are Italy, Greece, China, Kosovo and the USA.

Albania is a member of the World Bank, the WTO, the OSCE, and the OIC. It is among founding members of the Energy Community. Turkey and Albania are the only Muslim NATO members.

ALGERIA

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Demonym Algerian) with capital Algiers is a middle level regional power in the Maghreb region of North Africa. It is bordered by Tunisia to the northeast; Libya to the east, Niger to the southeast, Mali to the south, Mauritania to the southwest; the disputed Western Sahara territory to the west, and Morocco to the northwest. Its northern border is Mediterranean shore where its port city Algiers is located. Its time zone is UTC+1.

Algeria has a population of 44 million in an area of 2,381,740 square kilometres. Its population density of 16 per square kilometre is 168th in the world. It is the tenth largest country by area in the world after Russia; Canada, USA, China, Brazil, Australia, India, Argentina and Kazakhstan. In the African Union and the Arab World, it became the largest in area after Sudan's breakup. Among Muslim countries, it is the second largest after Kazakhstan. By another account, Algeria is 200 times bigger than The Gambia, the smallest African country. It is almost thrice as big as Pakistan or Turkey. In terms of population, Algeria is the 9th most populous country in Africa after Nigeria; Ethiopia, Egypt, DRC, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda. It is also the 32nd most populous country in the world. 80 % of its population is Arab and 20 % Berber. Its major languages are Arabic and French. Algerian Arabic is slightly different from the mainstream Arabic of the Middle East. French language is used in administration, education and business. 98 % Algerians adhere to Sunni Islam.

Algeria has a semi-arid geography with most of the population living in the fertile north while the Sahara dominates the south. Algerian geography is vulnerable to climate change.

From 500 BC to 1235 AD, Algeria has seen empires and dynasties including Phoenician; Carthaginian; Numidian; Altava; Ifranid; Rustamid, Sulaymanid; Zind, Hammadid and Zayyanid. The Regency of Algiers was established in 1516 and the Emirate of Abdul Qadir in 1832. The country became French Algeria in 1830 and independence from France was achieved in 1962.

Algeria is a unitary semi-presidential republic. A civil war started in Algeria in 1991 when the Islamic Salvation Front won elections. Many lives were lost before a ceasefire was achieved in 1997.

Dinar is the currency in use. Algerian economy is dominated by the state. Privatisation and foreign investment have been halted and imports are restricted. Algeria has 12 billion barrels of oil deposits, the 16th largest in the world. Its gas reserves of 160 trillion cubic metres are the 11th largest globally. Sonatrach, the national oil company, is the largest in Africa. Algeria supplies large quantities of gas mostly to Europe. The gas is exported both by pipeline and as liquefied natural gas.

The economy is primarily based on oil and gas exports, and efforts to diversify it have failed. The business climate needs improvement and inequalities among regions need to be removed. The external debt in Algeria is as low as 2 %. Its per capita income is 5722 dollars. Turkish direct investment in Algeria has reached 5 billion dollars. There are as many as 1400 Turkish companies present in Algeria. Even during the pandemic, 130 new Turkish companies were created in Algeria.

Algeria has one of the largest militaries and the highest defence budget in Africa. Having been a communist ally, it imports defence equipment from Russia. Vladimir Putin is the first Russian president in last 50 years to have visited Algeria. A 20 billion dollar bilateral deal was signed under which Russia is to provide twenty MiG-29 aircraft and a submarine to Algeria.

Algeria is a member of the African Union, the Arab League and the OPEC. It is a founding member of the Arab Maghreb Union. It is also a member of General Arabia Free Trade Area and the African Continent Free Trade Area. Algeria also has an association agreement with the European Union.

ANDORRA

Principality of Andorra or Principality of the Valleys of Andorra (Demonym Andorran) with capital Andorra la Villa is a sovereign landlocked country and a microstate on the Iberian Peninsula. It lies in the eastern Pyrenees, and is bordered by France to the north and Spain to the south. With an elevation of 3672 feet above mean sea level, the Andorra la Villa is the highest capital in Europe. Andorra falls in the UTC+1 hour time zone.

With a population of 77,000 in an area of 468 square kilometres, Andorra has a population density of 180 per square kilometre. Andorra is the sixteenth smallest country in the world and the sixth smallest in Europe. By population, it is globally the 11th smallest.

The Andorran people are a Romance ethnic group of originally Catalan descent. 48 % of the population is Andorran; 25 % Spanish, 11 % Occitanian and 5 % French. Its major languages are Catalan, French and Spanish. 90% of its people adhere to Christianity and 1 % to Islam.

Believed to have been created by Charlemagne, Andorra was ruled by the Count of Urgell until 988 and then transferred to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Urgell. It is a diarchy headed by two princes: the Catholic Bishop of Urgel in Catalonia, Spain; and the President of the French Republic. Independence from the Crown of Aragon was achieved in 1278 and from the French Empire in 1814.

It had the highest life expectancy in the world in 2013 at 81. Andorra is not an EU member but uses euro as currency. It has been a UN member since 1993. Its HDI is very high.

The GDP per capita nominal in Andorra is 45000 dollars. It is a tax haven and has a duty free status. Hydroelectric power is its natural resource. Only 2 % of its land is cultivable. Andorra manufactures cigarettes, cigars and furniture. Tourism accounts for 80 % of the GDP. Ski tourism, in particular, is extensive and a ground of 175 kilometre length is available for skiing. Nearly 10 million tourists visit Andorra per annum with 7 million of these visiting the ski ground.

ANGOLA

The Republic of Angola (Demonym Angolan) with capital Luanda is a nation state situated on the west coast of Southern Africa. It has Democratic Republic of Congo to the north; Zambia to the east, Namibia to the south and Atlantic Ocean to the west. Apart from the mainland, Angola also possesses Cabinda enclave in its north which borders Congo and DR Congo. The country is situated between 4S and 18S latitude, and 12E and 24E longitude. Luanda is a port city on the Atlantic shore.

Angola has a population of 36 million in an area of 1.2 million square kilometres. The annual population increment of Angola is as high as 3.4%. For comparison, Nigeria; Ethiopia; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Tanzania; Kenya; Iraq; Afghanistan; Mozambique; Ghana, Yemen, Egypt and Pakistan have population growth between 3.5 % and 2 % per annum. However, the population density in Angola is still as low as 30 per square kilometre.

Angola hosts a wide variety of ethnic groups including 37% Ovimbundu; 25% Ambundu; 13% Bakango; 21% miscellaneous African groups, 2% Mestizo (mixed African and European), and 1% Chinese. Its major languages are Portuguese and some African dialects. 91% Angolans adhere to Christianity and 1 % to Islam. The Christian segment is 54% Catholic and 28% Protestant.

Angola is the second largest Lusophone (Portuguese speaking) country in the world, both by total area and population, behind Brazil in both cases. It is the 24th largest country in the world, almost equal in area to Mali and twice the area of France. Within Africa, Angola is the 7th largest country by area. In comparative terms, Algeria is the largest and Seychelles the smallest country in Africa. Within the continental Africa, the Gambia is the smallest by area.

Angola has varied terrain including tropical beaches, a complex system of rivers and the Sub-Saharan desert extending south into Namibia. It is gifted with vast fossil fuels, and mineral reserves including diamonds, gold and copper.

The territory of Angola has been inhabited since or before 8000 BC. The nation-state of Angola originated from Portuguese colonisation, which initially began with coastal settlements and trading posts in the 16th century. The European settlers gradually began to establish themselves in the interior. The Portuguese colony that became Angola did not have its present borders until the early 20th century due to local resistance. Angola achieved independence in 1975 after a prolonged anti-colonial struggle supported by the former Soviet Union and Cuba and a communist party namely People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) assumed power. The anti-communist group by the name National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) resisted the ruling party with support from the US and South Africa. The prolonged civil war culminated in 2002, with UNITA emerging victorious and the political system changing to the presidential form of government.

Kwanza is the currency in use in Angola. The country is a leading diamond supplier and its per capita income is 2432 dollars. Despite its fast economic growth, Angola has low overall living standard with poor life expectancy, high infant mortality and uneven distribution of wealth.

Angolan wildlife and forests are rich. However, forestry remains unexplored. The land holders of Angola are small and plantation agriculture is limited. More than 90 % of farming is done at family and subsistence level. At the end of the Civil War, 4 million displaced persons returned and agriculture showed some improvement. Before independence, Angola was a bread basket of Southern Africa and a major exporter of bananas, coffee and sisal. The land mines left in place after the Civil War caused destruction of the countryside and millions were driven to cities. Currently, a mere 3% land is used for agriculture. Angola grows 50% of the required maize, 20% of rice and 5% of the required wheat. It is dependent on expensive food imports mainly from South Africa and Portugal.

Main earnings of the country are from oil. 1.4 billion barrels are produced per day. Oil revenue did grow but corruption became rampant due to the growth. To limit the IMF influence on Angola, China is building infrastructure in the country and has become its biggest trade partner. Angola exports crude oil and diamonds to China. Its imports from China include machinery, electrical products and construction materials.

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

Antigua (Demonym Antiguan) means *ancient*; and Barbuda (Demonym Barbudan), *bearded* in Spanish; bearded either referring to male population or the bearded fig trees. The Republic of Antigua and Barbuda with capital Saint John's is an island state in the West Indies between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. It is in the middle of the Leeward Islands and it forms part of the Lesser Antilles. Antigua is located roughly at 17N latitude with Barbuda in its north.

With a population of 103,000 in an area of 443 square kilometres, the country has a population density of nearly 200 persons, and falls among the densely populated nations in the region. Blacks, mostly of West African and Madeiran descent, constitute 90% of the population and English is the national language. 93 % the population adheres to Christianity and 1 % to Islam.

Both Antigua and Barbuda islands are low lying. The terrain has been influenced more by limestone formations than volcanic activity. The highest point in the country is the Boggy Peak in Antigua. It is a volcanic crater situated at 1300 feet elevation. The shorelines of both islands are indented with beaches, lagoons and natural harbours. The main harbour is also used by Britain.

Antigua was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493 but Spain did not colonise the island due to its lack of fresh water. Britain occupied Antigua in 1632 and Barbuda in 1678. Fresh water became manageable; and, sugarcane and tobacco were grown. At one time, many people died of smallpox.

Antigua and Barbuda joined the West Indies Federation in 1858. With breakup of the Federation, it became one of the West Indies Associated States in 1867. The present nation gained independence from Britain in 1981. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the British Monarch is its head of state. In 2017, the hurricane Irma damaged or destroyed 95% of Barbuda. It was completely evacuated and population moved to Antigua for the first time in modern history. Currently, 97% of the national population lives in Antigua.

East Caribbean Dollar is used as the currency in the country. Its HDI is high and it is a rich nation with a per capita income of 20,000 US\$. Tourism is a major source of income with American tourists being the highest in number. Investment banking is the other source and many banks have offices in Antigua. Its time zone is UTC-4 and driving is to the left. Agriculture is limited due to tourism and construction offering better financial incentives to the work force. Economic citizenship was offered to spur investment. There is an American university of medicine. The famous cricketers Vivian Richards and Brian Lara are Antiguans by origin.

ARGENTINA

Argentina, officially the Argentine Republic (Demonym Argentine) with capital Buenos Aires is a prominent regional power and a middle world power in southern half of South America. Sharing the bulk of the Southern Cone with Chile to the west, Argentina is also bordered by Bolivia to the north; and Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay to the northeast. It has South Atlantic Ocean to the east, and the Drake Passage to the south. .

Argentina has a population of 45 million in an area of 2,766890 square kilometres. Its area is the 8th largest in the world, after Russia, Canada, US, China, Brazil, Australia and India. In Americas, it is the 4th largest, and in South America, the 2nd largest after Brazil. It is also the largest Spanish speaking country in the world.

Its highest point is Aconcagua at 22,831 feet above mean sea level. This is also the highest point in Southern and Western Hemispheres. Ushuaia in Argentina is the southernmost city of the world. It lies only 1,000 kilometres from Antarctica. Drake Passage separates Argentina from Antarctica.

In most parts of the Latin America, the majority native population is ruled by minority white colonists. In Argentina, almost the entire population is white with 63% Italian element. Spanish and English are the major languages in Argentina. 85 % of the population adheres to Christianity and 1 % to Islam. Argentina achieved independence from Spain in 1810.

Peso is the currency in use. Argentina, Uruguay and Chile form part of the prosperous Southern Cone of South America which sometimes also includes Paraguay and Sao Paulo area in Brazil. It is a member of the G-20 and has the second largest economy in South America. It has 10,000\$ in per capita income and a high HDI of 0.48.

ARMENIA

Armenia (Demonym Armenian), in etymology, is either Persian or is rooted in Hayk the great- great grandson of Noah who defeated the Babylonian King Bel in 2492 BC and established his rule in the Ararat region. Further origin of the name is uncertain.

The Republic of Armenia with capital Yerevan is a land-locked country in Eurasia. Located in Western Asia on the Armenian Highlands, it is bordered by Turkey to the west; Georgia to the north; Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran to the south. It occupies the southern Caucasus Mountains and their low lands between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Yerevan is situated at 4011N, 4431E position.

Armenia has a population of 3 million in an area of 29,743 square kilometres. Armenian and Russian are its major languages. 99 % residents adhere to Christianity. 98 % of the population is Armenian and 1% Yazdi.

Armenia lies northeast of the Armenian highlands and has 86% mountainous area with fast flowing rivers but few forests. 13,419 feet high Mount Aragats is its highest point. Its average elevation is 10th highest in the world and its mountainous area is more than Switzerland and Nepal. Mount Ararat is the highest point in the region. It is now in Turkey but is claimed by Armenia. It is still clearly visible from Armenia and is present on its current national emblem.

Armenia is a unitary multiparty democratic nation-state with an ancient cultural heritage. The Satrapy of Armenia first appeared by the 6th century BC. It developed its own alphabet. The Kingdom of Armenia reached its height in the 1st century BC. It claims to be the first state to have formally adopted Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD. Between 5th century and World War I, it was divided up among stronger neighbours including Persians, Russians and Turks. During the War, Armenians living in their ancestral lands under the Ottoman Empire were systematically exterminated in the famous Armenian Genocide, a claim refuted by Turkey. In 1918, following the Russian Revolution, Armenia was forcibly occupied by Russia and in 1922, it became one of the founding members of the Soviet Union. The modern Republic of Armenia became independent in 1991 during dissolution of the Soviet Union. Nigorno Karabakh issue with Azerbaijan dominates and there is no permanent solution. However, Russia managed a ceasefire in November, 2020. Karabakh means the same as Kalabagh (black garden) in Urdu. Armenia supports the de facto independent Artsakh which was proclaimed in 1991. It has tense relations with Turkey as well due to this issue.

The parliament is called National Assembly. Its per capita income is 5,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high. It falls in the time zone UTC+4 and drives on the right.

Dram is the currency in use. Before independence the Armenian economy had boomed due to Soviet investment and industry had been the biggest sector of its economy. Its modern industry supplied chemicals and machine tools to the sister republics in exchange for raw materials and energy. Agriculture was 20% of its economy. With Soviet breakup, this virtually stopped and the economy suffered a lot. Armenian diaspora of 8 million in the Western countries is a big investment source. It is also an effective voice that earns foreign aid for Armenia.

Currently, Armenia mines copper, zinc, gold and lead. New sectors are precious stone processing, jewellery making; information and communication technology, and tourism. It imports gas and nuclear fuel from Russia but its main energy source is hydroelectric. 1988 Spitak earthquake in Armenia created disaster.

The liberal foreign investment regulations and privatisation of the state property have led to strong economic growth since 1995 with negligible inflation. Steady economic progress earned increasing support from international institutions including IMF, World Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). A billion dollar loan from foreign countries caused a reduction in the budget deficit and stabilisation of the currency.

Armenia focused on private business, energy, agriculture, food, transport, health and education. Now agriculture is 30% for food security. Unemployment is still high at 19% due to influx of refugees from Karabakh.

Armenia is a member of more than 40 organisations. Some of them include UN, WTO, the Council of Europe, CIS, ADB, Organisation of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, La Francophone, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and NATO Partnership for Peace program.

AUSTRALIA

The Commonwealth of Australia (Demonym Australian) with capital Canberra is a nation-state in the continent of Oceania. It is located between Indian Ocean in the west and Pacific Ocean generally in the north, east and south. It has Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and East Timor to the north, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands to the northeast and New Zealand to the southeast. The mainland Australia comprises the largest island on the globe. Australian territory also includes Tasmania and numerous smaller islands.

Australia has a population of 26 million in an area of 7,686,850 square kilometres. Its major languages are English and Aborigines. 44 % population adheres to Christianity, 3.2 % to Islam, 2.7 % to Hinduism and 2.4 % to Buddhism.

Australia is the 6th largest nation in the world by area after Russia, Canada, China, USA, and Brazil. Almost ten times larger than Pakistan, Australia is the oldest, flattest and driest inhabited continent, with the least fertile soils. Its size gives it a variety of landscapes with deserts in the centre, tropical rainforests in the northeast, tropical savannahs in the north and mountain ranges in the east. Its water content is 0.76% of the national territory.

While its area is big, the Australian population density of 3.5 is among the lowest in the world. Australia is highly urbanised and heavily concentrated on its eastern seaboard. Its capital is Canberra, but Sydney is its largest city. Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide are its other major metropolitan areas. The Australian population is increasing by 1.2% per annum and immigrants in Australia constitute 30% of the population. This is the highest proportion among countries with population in excess of 10 million. There are 50 million kangaroos in Australia. This number is roughly double of the human population.

Human habitation started in the present day Australia some 65,000 years ago. People migrated by land bridges and short sea crossings from what is now South East Asia. Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia is the nearest city to Indonesian city of Kopang in West Timor.

The Madjedbebe rock shelter in Arnhem Land of Australia is recognised as the oldest site indicating human presence. Its Lake Mungo remains are estimated to be 41,000 years old. These indicate presence of the hunter-gathering Aborigines culture; a civilisation with complex societies and economies estimated to have sustained a population of nearly 750,000.

Among Europeans, the Dutch were the first to reach Australia in the 17th century. They named the newly discovered area as New Holland. In 1770s and 1780s, the British claimed the eastern half of Australia and initially settled by way of deporting their convicts to the present day New South Wales. Subsequently, five more colonies were added by way of the well-known Gold Rush of 1850s. The 6 colonies federated forming the Commonwealth of Australia on 1st January, 1901 and gained independence from Britain. Presently, Australia is a Commonwealth realm and it has maintained a stable liberal democratic system. It functions as a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy, comprising 6 states and 10 territories.

Australian dollar is the currency in use. Today's Australia is a highly developed country with the 14th largest global economy. It is a market economy with 10th highest per capita income in the world. Australia overtook Switzerland in 2018 to occupy the top position in the average wealth. Its GDP nominal is 2 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 70,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.946, very high. Its time is UTC + 8, 9.5 and 10 and it drives to the left.

Australia has rich natural resources. It exports wheat; wool; iron ore; gold and natural gas. Though agriculture is only 3% and natural resources a mere 7% of the economy, these contribute greatly to export performance. Australia is also the 4th largest exporter of wine. The export markets include Japan, China, USA, South Korea and New Zealand.

The other sources of income include telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing, international education and tourism. Nearly 70% of the Australian economy is service sector. Australian Dollar is also used by the island nations including Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu.

Australia is a regional power. The defence budget of Australia is only 2% of the GDP, but is big enough to place Australia at the 13th highest position in military expenditure. The country has been a western ally and it has particularly played the intelligence gathering role for the NATO.

Australia is a member of the UNO, the G 20, the Commonwealth of Nations, ANZUS, WTO, APEC, Pacific Islands Forum, and ASEAN plus 6 Mechanism.

AUSTRIA

The Republic of Austria (Demonym Austrian) with capital Vienna is a landlocked country in Central Europe. It has Germany and Czech Republic to the north; Slovakia and Hungary to the east; Slovenia and Italy to the south; and Switzerland and Liechtenstein to the west.

With a population of 9 million in an area of 83,870 square kilometres, Austria has a population density of 108 per square kilometre. 76 % of the population is Austrian, speaking mostly German and Slovene languages. 64 % population adheres to Christianity, 8 % to Islam and 27 % to no religion. 55 % of the Christians follow Catholicism and 5 % Orthodoxy.

Austria initially emerged as a margravate around 976 AD. It started serving as junior branch of Hapsburg Monarchy, one of the most influential royal dynasties in history. Margrave was the title for the military commander responsible for defence in a border province of the Holy Roman Empire. That position became hereditary in certain cases until abolition of the Empire in 1806.

Austria was involved in the First World War under Emperor Franz Joseph. Its successor to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serbian student. This incident culminated in outbreak of the First World War between the Allied Forces and the Central Powers in 1914, which continued till 1918. The Allied Forces consisted of Britain, USA, Russia, France and Italy with Japan too supporting them. The Central Powers included Turkey, Austria and Germany. At the end of the war, the Allied Forces defeated the Central Powers. Almost 20 million people died during the war and another 70 million perished due to influenza. At the end of the war, a treaty was signed in Versailles outside Paris under which Germany was made to pay for the war reparations.

Austria is the birth place of Adolf Hitler who became the Chancellor of Germany. In 1939, Germany annexed Austria and invaded Poland. This led to outbreak of the Second World War which continued till 1945. It was fought between the Allies and the Axis. The former included Britain, USA, France and USSR. The Axis comprised Japan, Italy and Germany and was defeated. Almost 90 million people lost their lives. Following the German defeat, Austria became independent.

Presently, Austria is a parliamentary democracy with a directly elected Federal President as the Head of State and a Chancellor as the Head of the Government. Its major urban areas include Graz, Linz, Salzburg and Innsbruck.

Euro is the currency in use. The country has achieved a high living standard and it consistently ranks in the first 20 countries of the world by per capita income and HDI. Its GDP nominal is 540 billion dollars with a per capita value of 60,000 dollars and Its HDI is 0.926, very high. This is due to its highly industrialised and well developed

social market economy. The labour movements are influential in political decisions made at the government level.

Germany had been the main trading partner of Austria but currently its trade has expanded to include all EU members, thus reducing dependence on Germany alone. Foreign investment has been made attractive through necessary legislation. 67 % Austrian imports are from the EU. Tourism contributes 95 to the GDP.

Starting off as a neutral country, Austria now is in EU. Another important feature of Austria is that Vienna is the OPEC headquarters and it houses a UN office; the other three being in New York, Geneva and Nairobi each.

AZERBAIJAN

The Republic of Azerbaijan (Demonym Azeri) with capital Baku is a transcontinental nation situated in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia. It lies at cross roads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It borders Caspian Sea to the east; the Russia Republic of Dagestan to the north; Georgia to the northwest; Armenia and Turkey to the west and Iran to the south. Its time zone is UTC + 4.

With a population of 10.5 million in an area of 86,600 square kilometres, Azerbaijan has a population density of 117 per square kilometre. 92 % of the population is Azerbaijani, and 1 to 2 % each of Lezgin, Armenian, Russian and Talysh. Its major languages are Azeri and Russian. 97 % population adheres to Islam and 3 % to Christianity. The figures on religious sects are not officially available. However, as per reliable estimates, 55 to 85% population is Shiite and 15 to 45 % Sunni.

Azerbaijan is one of the six independent Turkic states; the other five being Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The capital Baku is also the largest city in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is a unitary semi-presidential republic. Azerbaijan pronounced independence in 1918 after collapse of the Russian Empire but in 1920 it was again incorporated by the Soviet Union. It achieved independence in August 1991 before dissolution of the USSR in the same year.

Manat is the currency in use in Azerbaijan and its per capita income is 6,900 dollars. Its 7 billion barrels of oil reserves are the 20th largest in the world and its 1.3 trillion cubic metres of gas reserves are 25th in the world ranking. The improvement in technology has now enabled the Western oil companies to tap its deep water reserves. Gas from Azerbaijan is supplied to Turkey and Europe through the Trans-

Anatolia and the Trans-Adriatic pipelines. Apart from natural resources, its Lesser Caucasus region is rich in minerals including gold, silver, iron, copper and titanium.

The agriculture basin of Azerbaijan is the largest in the region and gives it the distinction of possessing maximum per capita agricultural land among its neighbours. 55% of its terrain equalling 5 million hectares is available for agriculture. Azerbaijan produces 136 million cubic metres of wood per annum. Among its agricultural products, the subtropical crops, green vegetables, cotton and medicinal plants are grown profitably. Grains, potatoes, sugar beets and tobacco too are profitable.

11 million Iranians too speak the Azeri language. That number is higher than Azeri speakers in Azerbaijan itself. As per analysts, Azerbaijan's attractive resources could become a cause for a world war among the contestants. There is a territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ngorno Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan presently controlled by the breakaway Republic of Artsakh.

THE BAHAMAS

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas (Demonym Bahamian) with capital Nassau is an island country within the Lucayan Archipelago of the West Indies in the North Atlantic. It has Cuba and Hispaniola to the south and Turks and Caicos Islands to the southeast. The mainland American state, Florida, lies to its northwest and the islands of Florida called the Florida Keys are situated to its west. Its time zone is UTC-5.

With a population of 400,000 in an area of 13,490 square kilometres, The Bahamas has a population density of 25 per square kilometre. Black Bahamians make up 90 % and whites 5 % of the population. English is the language in use. 93% population adheres to the Christian faith, 75% Christians being Protestant.

The Bahamas takes up 97% area of the Lucayan Archipelago and is home to 88 % of its population. It consists of more than 3,000 islands, cays and islets in the Atlantic Ocean (A cay is a small low elevation sandy island on the surface of a coral reef). The Royal Bahamas Defence Force describes the Bahamas territory as encompassing 470 000 square kilometres of the ocean space.

The Bahamas islands were inhabited by the Arawak and Lucayans, a branch of the Arawakan speaking Taino people, for many centuries. Christopher Columbus was the first European to see the islands, making his first landfall in the New World on 12th October, 1492.

The Bahama Islands remained mostly deserted from 1513 to 1648 due to the local Lucayan population having been forcibly shipped to Hispaniola by the Spanish, or having died of the diseases that Europeans brought to the islands. The British colonists from Bermuda, known as the Elutheran Adventurers settled the island of Eluthera. They clamped down on piracy in 1718 and the territory became a British crown colony. After the American War of Independence in the 1770s, the Crown resettled thousands of American Loyalists in the territory. These were the colonists in the Thirteen Colonies who remained loyal to the British Crown during the War of Independence. They are often referred to as Tories, Royalists or King's Men. They were opposed by the Patriots, who supported the revolution. Tories brought slaves with them and established plantations on land grants. Enslaved Africans and their descendants became the majority ethnic group in the Bahamian population.

In 1834, slavery was abolished by the British and the Bahamas became a haven for freed African slaves. Africans liberated from illegal slave ships were resettled on the islands by the Royal Navy; while some North American slaves and Seminoles escaped to the Bahamas from Florida. Seminoles are the Native American people who developed in Florida in the 18th century. Today they live in Oklahoma and Florida, and comprise three federally recognised tribes; the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida Indians, as well as independent groups. Bahamians were even known to recognise the freedom of enslaved people carried by the ships of other nations which reached the Bahamas. Led by Sir Lynden O Pindling, the country gained independence from Britain in 1973. The Bahamas is a Commonwealth realm and the British monarch is its constitutional head.

The currency Bahamian dollar is kept at 1 to 1 peg to the US dollar. With a per capita income of 35,000 dollars, the Bahamas is the third richest country in the Americas by GDP after the USA and Canada. Its economy is based on tourism and offshore finance; the former accounting for 70% of the GDP and half of the work force. Almost 6 million tourists visit the Bahamas per annum, 70 % being cruise visitors. Banking and offshore international financial services are the next source of earning. There is no income tax in the Bahamas. Vegetables and fruits in the country are grown in limited quantity and 80% food is imported. The HDI in the Bahamas is very high.

BAHRAIN

Bahrain means two seas. The Kingdom of Bahrain (Demonym Bahraini) with capital Manama is an island country in West Asia on the Persian Gulf. It comprises a small archipelago made up of 50 natural and 33 artificial islands, centred on the Bahrain Island which alone makes up 80% of the total landmass. The country is situated

between Qatar Peninsula and northeastern coast of Saudi Arabia to which it is connected by a 25 kilometre causeway. Its time is UTC + 3.

Bahrain is the 3rd smallest nation in Asia after Maldives and Singapore. It has a population of 1.6 million in an area of 760 square kilometres. Its native population is half of the total including Iranians and Arabs, the remaining half being non-natives. Its languages are Arabic and English. 70 % of its people are Muslim, with majority belonging to the Shiite faith. Around half of the population is non-native.

Bahrain converted to Islam in 628 AD. Following a period of Arab rule, it remained under Portugal from 1521 until 1602 when it fell to Iran. In 1783, it was occupied by the local Al Khalifa family and remains under them to date. In the late 1800s, following successive treaties, it became a British protectorate and in 1971 it declared independence. Formerly an emirate, it was declared a constitutional Islamic monarchy in 2002. In 2011, the ruling family was accused of human rights abuses against the political opponents and the Shiite majority.

Bahrain is the site of the ancient Dilmun Civilisation famed since antiquity for its pearl fisheries. The Persian Gulf and Japan were the regions known for this art of making a living. With diving becoming easier in the 19th century, Australia too started to benefit from its pearl fisheries. In this art, pearls are made from body parts of sea animals and are used in making jewellery and buttons.

Bahrain is recognised by the World Bank as a high-income economy that was successfully diversified to become the first post-oil economy in the Persian Gulf. Decades of investment in banking and tourism paid dividends. With highly developed communication and transport network, Bahrain is home to multinational financers. It is the fastest growing and freest economy in the Middle East and construction on several major industrial products continues. It also signed a free trade agreement with the USA in 2004.

Its currency is Bahraini dinar and its per capita income 30,000 dollars. Islamic banking in Bahrain soared due to boom in oil demand. Petroleum and Aluminium are produced in the country and exported. 51 % of imports are crude oil that is used to make petroleum products. Their export constitutes 60 % of the total followed by Aluminium exports. Finance is next in importance to the economy followed by construction materials. Economic conditions in the country fluctuate with oil price.

Only 3 % land in Bahrain is arable and food including fruit is mostly imported. Meat is imported from Australia. Unemployment and depletion of oil as well as fresh water are major problems faced by Bahrain. The country has a high HDI of 0.875.

Bahrain is a member of the OIC, the NAM, the GCC and the Arab League. It is also a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Under a military agreement, Bahrain provides the US with a base in its territory. The US navy has been present in Bahrain since 1948. Juffair serves as headquarters for Commander

US Naval Forces Central Command, the US Fifth Fleet and 6,000 US military personnel. A permanent British Naval Base was also opened in Bahrain in 2018. One of the four overseas US carrier groups presently deployed is in Bahrain; the others three being in the US Pacific Coast, Japan and Italy each.

BANGLADESH

People's Republic of Bangladesh (Demonym Bangladeshi) with capital Dhaka lies in South Asia. It is bordered by India to the west, north and north east; Myanmar to the southeast, and Bay of Bengal to the south. It is narrowly separated from Bhutan and Nepal by the Siliguri Corridor and from China by the Indian state, Sikkim in the north.

It has a population of 170 million in an area of 148,460 square kilometres. Its languages are Bengali and English and religion, Muslim 91% and Hindu 8 %.

Bangladesh separated from Pakistan in 1971 with military aid from India. 98 % of its population is Bengali by ethnicity and it is the 8th most populous country in the world. The population density in Bangladesh is 1300 per square kilometre, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world

Its currency is Taka. Bangladesh faces problems due to corruption, refugees from Myanmar and climate change. It was rated 146th out of 180 countries in corruption index by Transparency International. Land administration was the sector with the most bribery in 2015, followed by education, police and water supply.

The enrolment in primary school is now nearly universal. Also, hundreds of thousands of women have entered the work force. The economy has improved somewhat and GDP nominal per capita has grown to 2600 dollars. Its Microcredit system helped in alleviating poverty. Bangladesh exports manpower, textiles, agriculture produce, shrimps, lobsters and pharmaceuticals. Over 80 % export earnings come from garment industry. Major industries of the country include shipbuilding, pharmaceuticals, steel, ceramics, electronics and leather goods. The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority have been established to help investment in factories and to complement the long standing Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority.

The service sector accounts for 35 % of the GDP and employs 40 % of the work force. The industrial sector is 35 % of the GDP and employs 20 % of the work force. The agriculture sector accounts for 14 % of the economy but employs 40 % of the work force. The major agricultural products in Bangladesh include rice, fish, tea, fruits, vegetables and jute.

There are 70 million workers in Bangladesh and unemployment has been reduced to 5 %. Of late the child mortality has fallen in the country and population control has become relatively more effective. Also, the management of natural disasters has improved somewhat. The six kilometre long Padma Bridge, the Dhaka Metro, a tunnel and some elevated expressways in Dhaka and Chittagong are a few projects of benefit to the citizens. Electricity shortage in the country has been overcome to a large extent. A project namely The Ashrayan has been put in place to provide free housing to the needy.

BARBADOS

Barbados (Demonym Barbadian) with capital Bridgetown is an island country and a microstate in the Lesser Antilles part of the West Indies. Barbados lies in the most eastern Caribbean region at 13N latitude. It is located north of eastern Venezuela, and Trinidad. Technically an Atlantic island, Barbados is closely associated with the Caribbean. In terms of tectonics, Barbados lies on the boundary of the South American and the Caribbean Plates. It is outside the principal Atlantic hurricane belt. Cape Verde in the eastern Atlantic is the nearest African country from Barbados.

Barbados has a population of 300,000 in an area of 436. Its language is English and religion 76 Christian and 1 % Muslim.

Barbados was inhabited by Amerindians and in particular Kalinago people in the 13th century. Spanish navigators took possession of the territory in the late 15th century and claimed it for the Crown of Castile. Barbados first appeared on the Spanish map in 1511. The Portuguese Empire claimed the island between 1532 and 1536 but abandoned it in 1620, with their only remnants being wild boars introduced for supply of meat during their visits.

An English ship took possession of the island in 1625 in the name of King James 1. In 1627, the first permanent settlers from Britain arrived and Barbados became an English and later British colony. As a wealthy sugar colony, it became an English centre for African slave trade until its being outlawed in 1833. Barbados gained independence in 1966 as the Commonwealth Realm. In 2021, Barbados transitioned to a republic within the Commonwealth.

92 % population of Barbados is African; 3 % each is multiracial and white, and 1.3 % Indian. Its population density is as high as 700 per square kilometre.

Its currency is Barbadian Dollar. The per capita income in Barbados is 21,000 dollars, the 50th highest in the world. Historically, the economy of Barbados had been dependent on sugarcane cultivation and related activities, but since the late 1970s

and early 1980s, it has diversified into the manufacturing and tourism sectors. Barbados is a leading tourist attraction in the region particularly for Britain and America. Now it has a well-developed mixed economy and a moderately high living standard. However, 20 % of its population lives in poverty with 10 % of its people facing food shortages.

Offshore finance and information services have become important foreign exchange earners in Barbados. Partly due to the staging of the 2007 Cricket World Cup, the island witnessed a construction boom, with the development of hotels, office complexes and homes. The economy fluctuates with political and economic conditions in the UK and the USA. The traditional trading partners of Barbados include Canada; the Caribbean Community, especially Trinidad and Tobago, the UK and the USA. The EU is assisting Barbados with financial aid to achieve modernisation in International Business and Financial Services. Barbados maintains the third largest stock exchange in the Caribbean Region. Its HDI is 0.8 and is rated high. Barbados standard time is UTC - 4 hours.

BELARUS

Belarus means White Russia. Republic of Belarus (Demonym Belarusian) with capital Minsk is a landlocked country in the Eastern Europe, sharing borders with Russia to the east; Ukraine to the south; Poland to the southwest; and Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest. It has hemiboreal climate. Such climate is halfway between temperate and subarctic zones

It has a population of 9.5 million in an area of 207,600. Its languages are Belarusian and Russian. Its religion is Christian 71%.

Belarus is the 13th largest and the 20th most populous country in Europe. It became a part of the Kievan Rus in 882. Until the 20th century, different states including Lithuania and Poland controlled Belarus. It became a democratic republic in 1918 after being conquered by Russia. It became a part of the USSR after the Russian Revolution. Much of its present border was drawn in 1939. It achieved independence from the USSR in 1990. Belarus has cultural similarity with Russia, and is considered its most natural ally.

Belarus is a developing country. Its currency is Belarus Ruble. Over 40% of its territory is forested. Service industries are its major economic sector and manufacturing represents 30 % of the GDP. 35 % of the national work force is employed in the industry. Belarus imports oil from Russia. Agriculture is centred on

growing potatoes and cattle by-products including meat. Half of its imports and exports are with Russia and a quarter with the EU. Exports include heavy machinery including tractors, agricultural products and energy products. Women hold more jobs than men in Belarus and it is one of the most equal countries in the world. Its GDP per capita nominal is 7,500 dollars. Belarus is a founding member of the UNO along with the Soviet Union and Ukraine in 1945

BELGIUM

The Kingdom of Belgium (Demonym Belgian) with capital Brussels lies in North Western Europe. It has Germany to the east; France to the southwest, Netherlands to the north and Luxembourg to the southeast. It is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system.

It has a population of 12 million in an area of 30,528. Its languages are Dutch and French. Its religion is Christian 64% and Muslim 8%.

The present day Belgium was established following the 1830 Belgian Revolution. It seceded from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which had incorporated the Southern Netherlands that comprised most of the modern day Belgium after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The name chosen for the new state is derived from the Latin word Belgium used in Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars to describe a nearby region in 55 BC. Belgium straddles the cultural boundary between Germanic and Latin Europe. It forms part of an area known as the Low Countries and historically somewhat larger region than the Benelux group of states as it also includes northern France. Two main linguistic groups in Belgium are 59 % Dutch speaking Flemish in the north and 41 % French speaking Walloons in the south.

The population density in Belgium is 376 per square kilometre and it is the 22nd most densely populated country in the world. Within Europe, Belgium is the 6th densest nation. The capital, Brussels, is also the largest city and nearly 30 % its population adheres to the Muslim faith. Other major cities in Belgium include Antwerp, Ghent, Charleroi, Liege, Bruges, Namur and Leuven.

Its currency is Euro. Since the middle Ages, Belgium has been relatively prosperous due to its central location connected commercially and politically with its bigger neighbours. Due to battles fought on its soil, Belgium earned the moniker The Battleground of Europe. This reputation was reinforced in the 20th century by the two world wars.

Belgium participated in the Industrial Revolution and during the course of the 20th century possessed a number of colonies in Africa including Congo, Rwanda and

Burundi. Between 1885 and 1908, the Congo Free State, which was privately owned by King Leopold of Belgium was characterised by widespread atrocities and diseases; amid public outcry in Europe, Belgium annexed the territory as a colony. Congo alone is 78 times bigger than Belgium. Its ivory and rubber were of special interest to the colonists. Belgium had 10 million Congolese killed because the locals failed to produce rubber in the amount desired by the imperialists. The Belgian colonial empire gained independence between 1960 and 1962.

The second half of the 20th century was marked by rising tensions between the Dutch speaking and the French speaking citizens fuelled by differences in language and culture and the unequal economic development of Flanders and Wallonia. The continuing antagonism led to several far reaching state reforms, resulting in the transition from a unitary to a federal arrangement between 1970 and 1993.

67 % population of the country is Belgian and 33 % non-Belgian. Germans are almost 1 % of the population. 28 % Belgians have no religion and among Christians, 61 % are Catholic. Its HDI is .937, rated very high and its time is UTC + 1.

Belgium is a developed country, with an advanced high income economy. The economy and transport infrastructure are globalised. These are integrated with the rest of Europe. Its location at the heart of a highly industrialised region helped make it the 15th largest trading nation in 2007.

Mining and steel making flourished in Belgium from 19th century to mid-20th century. After the Second World War, chemicals and petroleum industries expanded. Presently, the economy is characterised by a highly productive work force, high GNP and high exports per capita. Its GDP nominal per capita is 54,000 dollars. The economy is heavily service oriented. The Flemish Diamond Arc is the economic centre of Belgium. These are four metropolitan areas, three of them in Flanders. Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp and Leuven are the four corners of this diamond.

Its main imports are raw materials including raw diamonds, some machinery and equipment, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, transportation equipment and oil products, while its major exports include some machinery and equipment, chemicals, finished diamonds, metals, metal products and foodstuffs.

Belgium is one of the founding members of the EU, Eurozone, NATO, OECD and WTO. It is also a member of the trilateral Benelux Union along with the Netherlands and Luxembourg. In addition, Belgium is included in the Schengen Area. The capital Brussels hosts the headquarters of many international organisations, such as NATO and is also the de facto capital of the EU.

BELIZE

Belize (Demonym Belizean) with capital Belmopan is a country located on the northeastern coast of Central America. It is bordered by Mexico to the northwest, Caribbean Sea to the east, and Guatemala to the south and west. Its time is UTC - 6.

Belize has a population of 400,000 in an area of 22,960 and its religion is 88% Christian. It has the lowest population and population density in Central America. However, its population increases by 1.87 % per annum. This figure is the highest not only in the region but in the entire Western hemisphere.

The society is diverse composed of many cultures and languages. It is the only Central American country where English is the official language. All its neighbours are Spanish-speaking. Belizean Creole is its most widely spoken dialect followed by Spanish, Mayan languages, German dialects and Garifuna. The mestizo population in Belize is 53 % of the total and Creole, 26 %. Over half the population is multilingual, due to the diverse linguistic background of the population. It is often thought of as a Caribbean country in Central America due to its similarity to English-speaking Caribbean nations. Its institutions and official language reflect its history as a British colony. In the past, it was also called British Honduras due to its vicinity to Honduras. It is the only Commonwealth Realm in the mainland Central America.

The country is known for its September celebrations, its extensive coral reefs, and Punta music. It is 290 kilometres long and 110 kilometres wide. It shares a water boundary with Honduras to the southeast and its largest city is Belize City.

The Maya civilisation spread into the Belize area between 1500 BC and 300 AD. It flourished until about 1200 AD. The European contact of Belize began in 1492 when Christopher Columbus sailed along the Gulf of Honduras. European exploration was begun by English settlers in 1638. Spain and Britain both laid claim to the land until Britain defeated Spain in the Battle of St George's Caye in 1798. Belize became a Crown colony in 1862 and achieved independence in 1981. Now it is a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

Its currency, Belize Dollar is pegged to the US dollar. Its per capita income 7,000 dollars. The economy is small, mostly private enterprise that is based on agriculture, agro-based industry, and merchandising, with tourism and construction being relatively more significant. Industrial minerals, crude oil and petroleum are also produced in the country. Sugar remains the chief crop in Belize since colonial times, accounting for nearly half of exports, while the banana industry is the largest employer in the country. In 2007, Belize became the third largest exporter of papaya in the world.

Its location on the coast of Central America renders Belize a popular destination for vacationers and North American drug traffickers. A combination of factors like the climate, the Belize barrier reef, over 450 offshore cays, excellent fishing, safe waters for boating, scuba diving, snorkelling and free diving, numerous rivers for rafting and kayaking, various jungle and wildlife reserves of fauna and flora for hiking, bird watching, and helicopter touring, as well as many Maya sites, support the thriving tourism and ecotourism industry. A million tourists visit Belize per year generating revenue worth a billion dollars. The development costs for tourism are high but the government made tourism its second development priority after agriculture.

The nation is considered Central American and Caribbean with strong ties to both the American and Caribbean regions. It is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Central American Integration System (SICA). Belize is the only country to hold full membership in all three regional organisations.

BENIN

Republic of Benin (Demonym Beninese) with capital Porto Novo is a small tropical country located in West Africa. It is bordered by Togo to the west, Nigeria to the east, Burkina Faso to the northwest, and Niger to the northeast. It is rated among the least developed countries. The majority of its population lives on the southern coastline in the Bight of Benin which forms part of the Gulf of Guinea situated in the northernmost tropical portion of the Atlantic Ocean. Though the capital of Benin is Porto Novo, its seat of the government is Cotonou. It is also the most populous city and economic capital of the country.

With a population of 13 million in an area of 114,763, its population density is 95. 39 % of the population is Fon by ethnicity, 15 % each of Adja and Mina, 12 % Yoruba, 10 % Bariba, 9 % Fula and 6 % Ottamari. Benin has close to 40 national languages including Arabic, but its major Languages are French and Fon. Its Religion is 52% Christian, 25% Muslim and 18 % traditional religions.

From the 17th to the 19th century, political entities in the area included the Kingdom of Dahomey, the city state of Porto Novo and some states to the north. Since the early 17th century, the region was referred to as the Slave Coast due to its being used as a centre for slave trade via Atlantic to the New World. France took over the territory in 1894, incorporating it into French West Africa as French Dahomey. The Republic of Dahomey was established in 1958 and it gained full independence from France in

1960. As a sovereign state, Benin has had democratic as well as military governments. Benin remained a Marxist Leninist state between 1975 and 1990. In 1991, it changed to a multiparty republic.

Its Currency is CFA Franc and per capita income 1,500 dollars. The Beninese economy is dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade. The country is an exporter of palm oil and cotton. Cotton alone accounts for 40 % of the GDP and roughly 80 % of exports. GDP growth is 5 %. Services contribute the largest part of GDP mostly because of Benin's geographical location, enabling trade, transportation, transit and tourism activities with its neighbouring states. Porto Novo is an important port for the landlocked neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso.

Benin is a member of the UN, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, Francophonie, the Community of Sahel Saharan States, the African Petroleum Producers Association and the Niger Basin Authority. Benin is also a member of the OIC despite having a Christian majority.

BHUTAN

Bhutan (Demonym Bhutanese) with capital Thimphu is a landlocked country in South Asia. Located in the Eastern Himalayas, it is bordered by China to the north and India to the south. The capital Thimphu is its largest city and holds one seventh of the national population.

Bhutan is a mountainous country, known locally as Druk Yul or Land of the Dragon. This name reflects cultural heritage of the country. The exonym Bhutan likely derives from the Prakrit hybrid word Bhottamta, a name referring to its geographical proximity to Tibet called Bhotta. Nepal and Bangladesh are located near Bhutan but do not share a border with it.

With a population of 727,000 in an area of: 38,394, the population density in Bhutan is 19 per square kilometre. Its languages are Dzongkha and Tibetan and religion 84 % Buddhist and 11% Hindu. Its Currency is Ngultrum.

The subalpine Himalayan Mountains in the north rise from the country's lush subtropical plains in the south. In the Bhutanese Himalayas, there are peaks higher than 23,000 feet above sea level. Gangkhar Puensum is its highest peak and is also the highest unclimbed peak in the world. The wildlife of Bhutan is notable for its diversity, including the Himalayan takin and golden langur.

Bhutan and neighbouring Tibet experienced the spread of Buddhism, which originated in the Indian subcontinent during the lifetime of Gautama Buddha. Presently, Bhutan is based on a distinct Buddhist identity with Vajrayana Buddhism as its state religion. Bhutan has never been colonised and it enjoys good relations with India but somewhat tense relations with China and Nepal. Unification of Bhutan took place in 1634 and a period of desi administration followed between 1650 and 1905. The Wangchuck dynasty began in 1907. The Indo-Bhutan treaty was signed in 1949 and UN membership attained in 1971. Bhutan converted to a constitutional monarchy in 2008.

The value of its currency ngultrum is fixed to the Indian rupee and its per capita income is 3,500 dollars. The economy is one of the smallest in the world but has grown rapidly, from 8 % to 23 %. This was mainly due to the commissioning of the gigantic Tala Hydroelectric Power Station. The economy is based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and the sale of hydroelectric power to India. Agricultural practices consist largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Handicrafts, particularly weaving and the manufacture of religious art for home altars form a small cottage industry. A landscape that varies from hilly to ruggedly mountainous has made the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive. This, and a lack of access to sea, has meant that Bhutan has not been able to benefit from significant trading of its produce. Bhutan has no railways, though Indian Railways plans to link southern Bhutan to its vast network under an agreement. Bhutan entered a free trade accord with India in 2008, which additionally allowed Bhutanese imports and exports from third markets to transit India without tariffs. Bhutan had trade relations with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China until 1960, when it ceased its border with China after an influx of refugees.

Its major exports are electricity, cardamom, timber, handicrafts, cement, fruit, precious stones and spices. Its main imports include fuel, lubricants, grain, machinery, vehicles, fabrics and rice. Its 59 % exports are to India. The other export partners are Hong Kong and Bangladesh. Import partners include India, Japan and Sweden with 75 %, 7 % and 3 % of imports respectively. Due to closure of its border with China, trade between the two countries is almost non-existent.

BOLIVIA

The Plurinational State of Bolivia (Demonym Bolivar) with capital La Paz is a landlocked country in western central South America. It is bordered by Brazil to the north and east; Paraguay to the southeast; Argentina to the south; Chile to the southwest and Peru to the northwest. Its topography varies from the Andean Peaks

in the west to lowlands of the Amazon Basin in the east. One third of the country is within the Andean mountain range. Bolivia's administrative capital is La Paz, with Sucre as its constitutional capital. Its largest city and industrial hub is Santa Cruz de la Sierra, located on the flat tropical lowlands in its east. Its time is UTC -4.

Bolivia is the 27th largest country in the world. It is also the 7th largest landlocked country after Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Chad, Niger, Mali and Ethiopia. Within South America, it is the 5th largest after Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Colombia. Alongside Paraguay, it is one of the only two landlocked countries in the Americas. Also, it is the largest landlocked country in the Southern Hemisphere,

With a population of 12 million in an area of 1,098,580, its population density is 10 per square kilometre which is among the lowest in the world. 68 % of the population is mestizo, 20 % indigenous, 5 % white and 1 % black. Its recognised languages include Spanish, Quechua, Aymara and Guarani. Its Religion is 90 % Christian; 70 % Christians are Catholic and 17 % Protestant.

Before Spanish colonisation, the Andean region of Bolivia was part of the Inca Empire, while the northern and eastern lowlands were inhabited by independent tribes. Spanish conquistadors arriving from Cusco and Asuncion took control of the region in the 16th century. During their rule, Bolivia was administered by the Real Audiencia of Charcas. Spain built its empire in large part upon the silver that was extracted from Bolivia's mines. After the first call for independence in 1809, 16 years of war followed before the establishment of the Republic. It was named after Simon Bolivar, a military leader who freed much of South America from the Spanish rule. It declared independence in 1825 that was recognised in 1847. The government of Bolivia is unitary, communitarian presidential republic.

Over the course of the 19th century and early 20th century Bolivia lost control of several peripheral territories to neighbouring countries including the seizure of its coastline by Chile in 1879 and the Acre territory by Brazil.

Bolivia experienced a succession of military and civilian governments until 1971 when a CIA sponsored coup replaced the social government with a military dictatorship. It cracked down on the left wing and socialist opposition and other forms of dissent, resulting in the torture and deaths of a number of citizens. The military leader Banzer was ousted in 1978. He later returned as the democratically elected president from 1997 to 2001. Under the 2006 to 2021 presidency of Evo Morales the country saw significant growth and political stability.

Its currency is Boliviano and Its per capita income of 4,000 dollars ranks 126th in the world. It remains the second poorest country in South America despite having slashed poverty rates. It has the fastest growing economy in South America in terms of the GDP. Driven largely by its natural resources, Bolivia has become a regional leader in measures of economic growth although it remains a historically poor country. The growth contributed to a moderate decrease in inequality. Only Panama

and Dominican Republic performed better than Bolivia against its 5 % growth. Bolivia has the highest proportional rate of financial reserves of any nation in the world.

It is a developing country and its main economic activities include agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and manufacturing goods such as textiles, clothing, refined metals, and refined petroleum. The country is also known for its production of coca leaves and refined cocaine. Coca cultivation spreads to 40,000 hectares and cocaine production amounts to 317 metric tons.

Sitting at the heart of South America in the Central Andes, Bolivia is historically renowned for its vast mineral wealth and mining is a major sector of its economy. Bolivia has the largest lithium reserves, 2nd largest antimony, 3rd largest iron ore and 9th largest copper reserves in the world. Uranium and nickel exist in considerable amount in the underexplored eastern regions in addition to diamond reserves of Santa Cruz department.

In 2019, Bolivia was the 8th largest world producer of silver, 5th largest of tin, 7th largest of zinc, 8th largest of lead, 4th largest of boron, and 6th largest of tungsten. Its gold production is to the tune of 25 tons per year. It also has amethyst extraction.

Bolivia has the second largest natural gas reserves in South America. Its gas exports bring in 2 billion dollars per year. However the companies are required to sell gas to state Hydrocarbon Company to meet domestic requirements first. Lithium reserves are 25 % of the world reserves. However its mining disturbs salt flats that are important to tourism and is limited in production. Tourism has become increasingly important due to its attractive tourist places and festivals.

The agriculture in Bolivia is less relevant to GDP compared to the rest of Latin America. Close to 10 million tons of sugarcane is produced per annum. It is the 10th largest producer of soybean in the world.

Its largest exports are based on soy, including soybean meal and soybean oil. The culture of soy was brought in by Brazilians in 2006. Almost 50 % of soy producers in Bolivia are people from Brazil, or descendants of Brazilians. The first Brazilian producers began to arrive in 1990s. Before that there was a lot of land that was not used, or where only subsistence agriculture was practiced. The most lucrative agricultural product remains to be coca, of which Bolivia is currently the third largest cultivator in the world. It also has considerable yields of maize, potato, sorghum, banana, rice and wheat. Bolivia is a member of the UN, IMF, NAM, OAS, ACTO, ALBE, USAN and Bank of the South.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia & Herzegovina (Demonym: Bosnian) with capital Sarajevo has a population is 3.5 million in an Area of 51,209. Its Languages are Bosnian and Croatian and Religion Muslim, and Christian. Its Currency is Dinar.

Turkey, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia are the majority Muslim countries in Europe. Bosnia is a country in South East Europe within Balkan Peninsula. Bosnia shares borders with Croatia to the north, west and south; Serbia to the east and Montenegro to the south east. In the south, it has a 20 kilometre long coast on the Adriatic Sea, with the town of Neum being its only access to the sea. Bosnia has a moderate continental climate with hot summers and cold snowy winters. In the central and eastern regions, the geography is mountainous, in the northwest it is moderately hilly, and in the northeast it is predominantly flat. Herzegovina, the smaller southern region, has a mediterranean climate and is mostly mountainous. The capital Sarajevo is also the largest city in the country.

The area has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic age. After the arrival of the Indo-Europeans, the area was populated by Illyrian and Celtic civilisations. The ancestors of the South Slavic people that populate the area today arrived between the 6th and the 9th centuries. In the 12th century, the Banate of Bosnia was established. By the 14th century, this had evolved into the Kingdom of Bosnia. In 1463, it was annexed into the Ottoman Empire, under whose rule it remained until the late 19th century. The Ottomans brought Islam to the region. From 1878 until World War One, the country remained under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In the interwar period, it was part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War Two, it was granted full republic status in the newly formed Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1992, following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the republic proclaimed independence. This was followed by the Bosnian War, which lasted until late 1995 and ended with the signing of the Dayton Accord.

In Bosnia; Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats represent 50 %, 31 % and 15 % population respectively. Bosniaks are Muslim; Serbs are Orthodox Christian, and Croats Catholic Christian. There are small groups of Jews, Roma, Albanians, Montenegrins, Ukrainians and Turks in the country.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a federal parliamentary directorial republic and its legislature is bicameral. It encompasses two autonomous entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republic of Srpska. A third unit, the Brcko District, is governed by its own local government. As per the Dayton Accord, its three member presidency is made up of one member from each of the three major ethnic groups. The Federation voters vote for Bosniak and Croat presidents and Republika Srpska region voters for the Serb president. Each of the three presidents serves for eight month duration and then makes way for the next one. This continues till end of the four year term with each president serving twice. The central government has limited power due to the country being largely decentralised.

The writing system used in Bosnia is Latin and Cyrillic. Its population density is 70 per square kilometre and GDP nominal per capita is 8,000 dollars. It is a developing country ranking 74th in the HDI. Its economy is dominated by industry and agriculture, followed by tourism and the service sector. Tourism has increased significantly in recent years. The country has a social security and universal healthcare system, and primary and secondary level education in Bosnia is free.

One legacy of the previous era is a strong industry. Under Bijedic and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, metal industries were promoted in the republic, resulting in the development of a large share of Yugoslav plants. The SR Bosnia and Herzegovina had a very strong industrial export oriented economy in the 1970s and 1980s with large scale exports worth millions of dollars. At present the country exports car seats, electricity, processed wood, furniture and aluminium. It imports crude oil, motor oil, coal, automobiles and briquettes. During the Bosnian War, the economy suffered a loss of 325 billion dollars. Now it faces a dual problem of rebuilding the economy and transition to liberal market from mixed economy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, and the Partnership for Peace, and the Central European Free Trade Agreement. It is also a founding member of the Union for the Mediterranean, established in 2008. It is an EU candidate country and has also been a candidate for NATO membership since 2010.

BOTSWANA

Republic of Botswana (Demonym Motswana) with capital Gaborone has a population of 2.7 million in an area of 600,370. Its languages are Setswana and English and religion 80% Christian. Its Currency is Pula.

The land of the Tswana, Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It borders South Africa to the south and southwest; Namibia to the west and north, and Zimbabwe to the northeast. It is connected by the Kazungula Bridge to Zambia, across the world's shortest border between the two countries. Angola lies to its northwest across a thin corridor belonging to Namibia. It is dependent on South Africa or Namibia for access to sea.

A person belonging to Botswana is known as a Motswana. The people as a whole or in plural sense are called Batswana and the language is named Setswana. Botswana is essentially the nation state of the Tswana who make up 79 % of the population. About 12 % population lives in the capital and the largest city, Gaborone. Formerly one of the poorest countries, with a GDP per capita of 70 dollars in 1960s,

Botswana has transformed itself into an upper middle income country, with one of the fastest growing economies.

Modern day humans first inhabited the country over 200,000 years ago. The Tswana ethnic group descended mainly from Bantu speaking tribes. In 1885, the British colonised the area. Botswana became an independent Commonwealth Republic in 1966. It is a unitary representative republic, with the most continuous elections and the lowest corruption ranking in Africa.

Its official language is English and national language is Setswana. Its ethnic groups include 79 % Tswana, 11 % Kalanga and 2 % San. 70 % of Christians adhere to the Protestant faith while 15 % follow no religion. 70 % of its territory is Kalahari Desert. Its population density is 4.6 per square kilometre. This is among the lowest in the world with rank 231.

Botswana is resource abundant and a good institutional framework allowed reinvestment of resource income in order to generate stable future income. Botswana is the biggest producer of diamond in the world. It has a high level of economic freedom compared to other African countries. Mining of diamonds, gold, uranium, copper and oil is conducted by several international corporations having regional headquarters in Botswana. Tourism and cattle also contribute to the economy. Botswana is among the most prosperous countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Its per capita nominal income is 10,000 dollars. It has a high standard of living around that of Mexico. Its HDI is the 3rd highest in Continental Sub Saharan Africa after Gabon and South Africa. Economic growth averaged 9 % per annum between 1966 and 1999.

BRAZIL

The Federative Republic of Brazil (Demonym Brazilian) has its Capital in Brasilia. Its population is 211 million in an area of 8,511,965. Its Languages are Portuguese and Spanish and Religion 89 % Christian. Its Currency is real.

Brazil is a large country in the eastern South America. It has 7500 kilometre long coast line on the Southern Atlantic Ocean in its east and shares land borders with all countries in South America except Ecuador and Chile. It is bordered by Uruguay to the south; Argentina and Paraguay to the southwest; Bolivia and Peru to the west; Colombia to the northwest; and, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname to the north. It also shares its northern border with French Guiana, an overseas French territory.

Brazil lies between latitudes 6N and 34S, and longitudes 28W and 74W. It is the only country with both the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn passing through it. It has 4 time zones with standard times UTC-2, UTC-3, UTC-4 and UTC-5.

Brazil was inhabited by numerous tribal nations prior to the landing in 1500 of the explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral who claimed the area for the Portuguese Empire. The mass migration from around the world rendered it as one of the most multicultural and ethnically diverse nations. Its population is 48% white, 43% mixed and 7% black.

Brazil is the 7th largest country in the world by population after China, India, USA, Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria. Due to their higher birth rate, Pakistan and Nigeria surpassed Brazil only in recent years. Brasilia is the capital of Brazil, and Sao Paulo, its most populous city.

Brazil is the fifth largest country in area in the world after Russia, Canada, China and USA. It is also the largest country in both South America and Latin America. It spans 47% area of South America. In America as a whole Brazil is the second largest in population and the third largest in area. Brazil is the only former Portuguese colony in Americas. Today it has 20 times more population than Portugal and is the largest Portuguese speaking country in the world both by area and population.

The Amazon River Basin of Brazil includes a vast tropical forest. This is home to diverse wildlife, a variety of ecological systems and extensive natural resources spanning numerous protected habitats. The unique environmental heritage makes Brazil one of the 17 mega diverse countries, and, its deforestation and environmental protection is a subject of global debate.

Brazil remained a Portuguese colony until 1808 when the capital of the Portuguese Empire was transferred from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. In 1815, the colony was elevated to the rank of Kingdom upon formation of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves. Independence from Portugal was achieved in 1822 with creation of the Empire of Brazil. It became a unitary state governed under a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary system. Ratification of the first constitution in 1824 led to formation of a bicameral legislature, now called the National Congress. Brazil became a presidential republic in 1889 following a military coup de tat. Another military coup occurred in 1964 and ruled till 1985 when civilian government returned. Under the present constitution formulated in 1988, it became a federal republic. Its population density is 25 per square kilometre.

Brazil has an advanced emerging economy with the 9th largest nominal GDP. It has remained the largest coffee producer in the world since the past 150 years.

It is a member of BRICS, G20, USAN, MERCOSUR, OAS, Organisation of Ibero-American States, and Community of Portuguese Language Countries. It has 65% Catholic and 22% Protestant population.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Nation of Brunei (Demony: Bruneian) has its Capital in Bandar Seri Begawan. It has a population of 460,000 in an area of 5770. Its languages are Malay and English and religion 81% Muslim and 9% Christian. Its currency is Dollar.

Brunei is situated in South East Asia on the northern coast of the island of Borneo. Apart from its coastline on the South China Sea, it is completely surrounded by the Malaysian state of Sarawak, with its territory bifurcated by the Sarawak district of Limbang. Brunei is the only sovereign state entirely on Borneo; the remainder of the island is divided between its multi-landmass neighbours of Malaysia and Indonesia. The capital is situated barely 5 degrees north of the equator. It is the largest city in the country and almost 100,000 people live in it. . Its official language is Malay and Islam is the state religion of the country.

Brunei Empire was created in 1368. At its peak from 1485 to 1528, Sultan Bolkiah reigned supreme and his territory extended as far as to Manila. After ups and downs, it became a British protectorate in 1888 and also came under Japan briefly from 1941 to 1945. Independence from Britain was achieved in 1984. The same year it became ASEAN member. 70% of its population is Malay and 10% Chinese. 9 % population adheres to Buddhist faith. It drives on left.

The government of Brunei is an absolute monarchy ruled by the Sultan of Brunei, and it implements a fusion of English common law and jurisprudence inspired by Islam, including sharia. Economic growth in 1990s and 2000s transformed Brunei into an industrialised nation. Brunei is the 5th richest world nation due to its oil and gas reserves. Its GDP per capita nominal is 35,000 dollars and its HDI is high.

BULGARIA

Republic of Bulgaria(Demony: Bulgarian) has its Capital in Sofia. Its Population is 7 million in an Area of 110,910. Its Languages are Bulgarian and Turkish and Religion, Orthodox 80% and Muslim 14%. Its Currency is Lev.

Bulgaria is a country in southeast Europe. It has Romania to the north; Serbia and North Macedonia to the west; Greece and Turkey to the south; and Black Sea to the

east. Bulgaria's capital Sofia is also its largest city. Its other cities are Plovdiv, Varna and Burgos.

One of the earliest societies in Bulgaria was the Neolithic Kara Novo culture which dates back to 6500 BC. In 6th to 3rd century BC, the region was a battleground for ancient Thracians, Persians, Celts and Macedonians. Stability came when the Roman Empire conquered the region in 45 AD. The Eastern Roman Empire lost some of the territories to Slavic and then Turkic Bulgar invaders in the late 7th century. The Bulgars founded the First Bulgarian Empire in 681 AD which dominated most of the Balkans and significantly influenced Slavic cultures by developing Cyrillic script. This state lasted until early 11th century, when Byzantine Emperor Basil II conquered and dismantled it. A successful Bulgarian revolt in 1185 established a 2nd Bulgarian Empire which reached its apex under Ivan Asen II in 1218-1241. After numerous exhausting wars and feudal strife, the empire disintegrated in 1396 and fell to Ottoman rule that continued for nearly five centuries.

The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 resulted in formation of the 3rd and the current Bulgarian state. Many ethnic Bulgarians were left outside the new nation's borders, which stoked irredentist sentiments that led to several conflicts with its neighbours and alliances with Germany in both the world wars. In 1946, Bulgaria came under the Soviet-led eastern bloc and became a one-party socialist state. The ruling communist party gave up its monopoly on power after the revolutions of 1989 and allowed multiparty elections. Bulgaria then transitioned into a democracy and a market-based economy. Since adopting democratic constitution in 1991, Bulgaria has been a unitary parliamentary republic composed of 27 provinces, with a high degree of political, administrative and economic centralisation.

Its market economy is part of the Single European Market. It relies mostly on services followed by industry, especially machine building and mining. It is 52nd in HDI; the lowest in EU along with Romania. Widespread corruption is a major problem in Bulgaria. Its population is shrinking. From 9 million in 1988, it dropped to 7 million and its military too shrank from 145,000 to 35000. Its air force flies Mig 29 and SU 25 aircraft.

Bulgaria is a member of the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe. It is a founding state of the OSCE and has thrice taken a seat in the UN Security Council.

BURKINA FASO

Burkina alone is also in use (Demonym: Burkinabe). Its Capital is Ouagadougou. It has a Population of 20 million in an Area of 274,200. Its Languages are French and Mossi and Religion, Muslim 64% and Christian 26%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in Western Africa. It has borders with Mali to the north; Niger to the east; Benin to the southeast; Togo and Ghana to the south and Ivory Coast to the southwest. It lies between latitudes 9N to 15N and longitude 6W to 3E. Its standard time is UTC.

Burkina is the 74th largest nation in area and 61st in population in the world.

Most Burkinabes by origin are migrants from the neighbour Ghana. It gained independence in 1960 from France. Earlier, the nation had been named Upper Volta after its synonymous river. The present name, meaning upright people was assigned by President Sankara in 1984. Sankara tried to reform the society through land redistribution, outlawing of female genital mutilation, and prevention of forced marriage as well as polygamy. He was killed in a coup in 1987. Apart from other stake holders coups are also sponsored by Ivory Coast in Burkina Faso. In 2015, Kabore was elected president. There was a terrorist attack in 2016 in Burkina.

In gold mining, Burkina ranks number 4 in Africa. 55 tons of gold were produced in 2018. Apart from other precious items; copper, iron, manganese and phosphates are also mined. Burkina Faso however, is one of the least developed countries in the world. Its GDP per capita nominal is 800 dollars.

Its military has 6000 personnel and air force, 20 aircraft. Being landlocked, it has no navy. Army is neglected compared to elite force of the presidential security. Food shortages are common.

It is a member of the UN, La Francophonie and the OIC. It is currently suspended from ECOWAS and the AU.

BURUNDI

Republic of Burundi (Demonym: Burundian) has its Capital at Bujumbura. Its Population is 11.2 million in an Area of 27,830. Its Languages are Kirundi and French and Religion: Christian 92% and Muslim 3%. Its Currency is Burundi Franc.

Burundi is a landlocked country in the Great Rift Valley where the African Great Lakes region and East Africa converge. It is bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and southeast and DR Congo to the west. Lake Tanganyika lies along its south-western border. Its water content is 10%.

Hutu, Tutsi and Twa peoples have lived in the present day Burundi for at least 500 years. For more than 200 years of these it was an independent country. Hutu are 84 % of the population, Tutsi close to 15% and Twa 1%. The Kingdom of Burundi or Urundi emerged on its eastern foothills in the 16th century. It annexed small neighbours and expanded. The ruler was a traditional monarch with several princes. Succession struggles among the royalty were common. By mid-18th century the Tutsi royalty consolidated authority. The king known as mwami headed aristocracy called ganwa which owned most of the land and imposed a tribute on Hutu farmers and Tutsi herders in exchange for providing them protection. The court was predominantly Tutsi who held higher status. However, the classification was not purely ethnic. Hutus with wealth and livestock were granted Tutsi status. Similarly, Tutsis not living to expectation were downgraded to Hutu. Regional ties and power struggle played far more determining role than ethnicity.

Since 1884, German East Africa Company had been active in the African Great Lakes region. The British Empire and Sultanate of Zanzibar started to dominate in some areas. The German Company called in the German government to put down Abushiri revolts. In 1880s and 1890s, German Empire came to set German East Africa including Urundi, Ruanda and mainland Tanzania (Tanganyika). Gitega served as the administrative centre for Ruanda-Urundi region.

During WWI, East African campaign was greatly affected. In 1916 Britain and Belgium launched coordinated attacks on the Germans and their numerical superiority led to the German retreat. Under Versailles Treaty, Germany ceded most of the territory to Belgium and the two countries started ruling their respective parts.

Burundi was Belgian territory under League of Nations and then UN Trust and Rwanda. Unlike the common misconception, Burundi and Rwanda have never been under common rule until the time of European colonisation.

Burundi gained independence on 1st July 1962. It initially had a monarchy but a series of assassinations, coups and regional instability culminated in establishment of a republic in 1966. Two bouts of ethnic cleansing left 100,000 and 200,000 dead respectively in 1970s and 1990s. Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both Hutus died together in an aeroplane shot down in April 2014.

The Arusha Accord was signed in 2000 and calm established. Burundi has two capitals namely Gitega and Bujumbura. Burundi left the International Court of Justice in 2016.

Its population density of 315 is the second highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a rural society with 13% urban population. Subsistence farming and grazing are the main occupations. Its GDP is 8 billion US dollars while its per capita GDP is as low as 727 dollars. Deforestation, soil erosion and habitat loss are common. 6% land is covered by commercial tree plantation. Poverty, corruption, weak infrastructure, poor health

facilities and illiteracy are common. Burundi population is among the least happy and its youth emigrate in search of better opportunities.

The capital is located at the coordinates 4S30E. its time is UTC+2. The Legislative has senate and national assembly. A part of Rwanda-Urundi remained UN trust territory from 1945 to 1962. Burundi is a member of the African Union, Common Market for East and South Africa, the UNO, and NAM.

CAMBODIA

Kingdom of Cambodia (Demonym: Cambodian) has its Capital at Phnom Penh. Its Population is 16 million in an Area of 18,104 Its Languages are Khmer and French and Religion: Buddhist 97 and Muslim 2. Its Currency is Riel.

Cambodia lies in southern portion of the Indochina Peninsula. It is bordered by Thailand to the northwest, Laos to the northeast, Vietnam to the east and Gulf of Thailand to the southwest. Its tropical monsoon climate has two seasons. Cambodia is made up of a central floodplain around the Tonle Sap Lake and Mekong Delta surrounded by mountainous regions. It is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change.

The present day Cambodia has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In 802 AD, Jayavarman 2 declared himself king uniting the warring Khmer provinces of Chelna under the name Kambuja. This marked the beginning of the Khmer Empire, which flourished for over 600 years. The Indianised kingdom facilitated the spread of first Hinduism and then Buddhism to much of South East Asia and undertook many religious infrastructural projects throughout the region. Angkor Wat is the most famous of these structures and is designated as a World Heritage Site.

In the 15th century, Cambodia experienced a decline of power, while its neighbours Vietnam and Thailand grew stronger. Except for its brief occupation by Japan during the Second World War, Cambodia remained under France from 1863 till its independence in 1953.

Despite its neutrality, the Vietnam War extended into Cambodia in 1965 via the Ho Chi Minh and Sihanouk trails. A coup in 1970 installed the US aligned Khmer Republic until being overthrown by the Khmer Rouge in 1975 who ruled till 1979, carrying out mass genocide. They were overthrown in the Cambodian Vietnamese War when the latter occupied Peoples Republic of Kampuchea.

Following the 1991 Paris Peace Accords which formally ended the war with Vietnam, Cambodia was governed by a UN mission from 1992 to 1993. The UN withdrew after

holding elections in which 90 % of the registered voters cast ballots. Now it is an elective constitutional monarchy. Norodom Sihamoni was chosen by the Royal Council of the Throne as the head of state. Hun Sen is the prime minister. In office since 1985, he is the longest serving non-royal leader in South East Asia.

The capital Phnom Penh is also the largest city in Cambodia. It serves as political, economic and cultural centre of the country. Theravada Buddhism is enshrined in the constitution as the official state religion and is practiced by 97 % population. Vietnamese, Chinese, Chams and 30 hill tribes constitute the minority groups.

Cambodia is a least developed country and its GDP nominal per capita is 2000 dollars. Agriculture remains the dominant economic sector, with growth in textiles, construction, garments and tourism leading to increased foreign investment and international trade. Its population density is 95, its HDI medium and time UTC + 7. It is a member of the UN, ASEAN, RECP, EAS, WTO, NAM and La Francophonie. It is a dialogue partner of SCO.

CAMEROON

Republic of Cameroon (Demony: Cameroonian) has its Capital at Yaoundé. Its Population is 27 million in an Area 475,440. Its Languages are French and English and Religion: Christian 60 %, Muslim 20 %. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa. It is bordered by Nigeria to the west and north; Chad to the northeast, the Central African Republic to the east and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Its coastline lies on the Bight of Biafra, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Due to its strategic position at the crossroads between West Africa and Central Africa, it has been categorised as being in both camps. There are 250 native languages in Cameroon.

Early inhabitants of the territory included the Sao civilisation around Lake Chad, and the Baka hunter-gatherers in the southeastern rainforests. Portuguese explorers reached the coast in the 15th century and named the area as Shrimp River, which became Cameroon in English. Fulani soldiers founded the Adamawa Emirate in the north in the 19th century, and various ethnic groups of the west and the northwest established powerful chiefdoms and fomdoms.

Cameroon became a German colony in 1884. After WW1, it was divided between France and the UK as League of Nations mandates. The French part of the country won independence in January 1960 and the part under the UK in 1961.

Cameroon is referred to as Africa in Miniature due to its geological, linguistic and cultural diversity. Its natural features include beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests, and savannahs. Its highest point, 11350 feet high Mount Cameroon lies in its southwest. Its most populous cities are; Douala on the Wouri River, its economic capital and main seaport; Yaoundé, its political capital and Garoua, Limbe in the southwest, its natural seaport. Cameroon is well-known for its native music styles and for its national football team.

Its ethnic groups include Bamileke, Beti, Mandera and Hausa each group representing 20 % to 10 % of the population. Its population density is 40 and GDP nominal per capita 1800 dollars. A large part of the Cameroonian population is subsistence farmers. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 1.

Cameroon is a member of the AU, the UN, the OIF, the Commonwealth of Nations, the NAM and the OIC.

CANADA

Federation of Canada (Demony: Canadian) has its Capital at Ottawa. Its Population is 40.5 million in an Area of 9,984,670. Its Languages are English and French and Religion: Christian 69% and Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Canadian Dollar.

Canada lies in North America. Its ten provinces and three territories extend from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and northward into the Arctic Ocean. By total area including its waters, Canada is the second largest country in the world, after Russia. The terrain of Canada includes 2 million lakes 563 of which are larger than 100 square kilometres. Canada thus has the largest fresh water lakes area in the world occupying 12 % of its total territory. Its pure land area is 9,093,507 square kilometres, ranking fourth in the world. There are also fresh water glaciers in the Canadian Rockies, the Coast Mountains, and the Arctic Cordillera. Canada is geologically active, having many earthquakes and potentially active volcanoes, notably Mount Meagre massif, Mount Garibaldi, Mount Cayley, and the Mount Edziza volcanic complex

Canada stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east, along the Arctic Ocean to the north, and to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Its vast maritime terrain gives it the world's longest coastline of 243,042 kilometres. In addition to sharing the world's largest land border with the United States, spanning 8,891 kilometres, Canada shares a land border with Greenland, and hence the Kingdom of Denmark, to the northeast, on Hans Island, and a maritime boundary with France's overseas collectivity of Saint Pierre and Miquelon to the southeast. Canada also has the

world's northernmost settlement, Canadian Forces Station Alert, on Ellesmere Island at 82.5N latitude and a mere 817 kilometres from the North Pole.

Canada can be divided into seven physiographic regions. These include; the Canadian Shield, the Interior Plains, the Great Lakes-St Lawrence Lowlands, the Appalachian region, the Western Cordillera, Hudson Bay Lowlands, and the Arctic Archipelago. Boreal forests prevail throughout the country, ice is prominent in northern Arctic regions and through the Rocky Mountains, and the relatively flat Canadian Prairies in the southwest facilitate productive agriculture. The Great Lakes feed the St Lawrence River in the southeast where the lowlands host much of the economic output. Being huge, its time zones extend from UTC-3.5 to UTC-8.

Canada is characterised by a wide range of both meteorological and geological regions. It is sparsely populated with a population density of 4.2 per square kilometre. The vast majority of its population resides south of the 55th parallel in urban areas. Its capital Ottawa is situated at 45N76E position and its largest city is Toronto. Montreal and Vancouver are the other large metropolitan areas in Canada.

Indigenous peoples have continuously inhabited what is now Canada for thousands of years. Beginning in the 16th century, British and French expeditions explored and later settled along its Atlantic Coast. As a consequence of various armed conflicts, France ceded nearly all of its colonies in North America in 1763. Canada gained independence from the UK as a confederation in 1867. It became a statute of Westminster in 1931 and Patriation in 1982. Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. Its parliament includes a senate as the upper house and a house of commons as the lower house. The prime minister is elected by the vote in the House of Commons. The governor general represents the British monarch as the head of state as the country is a Commonwealth realm. It is officially bilingual in the federal jurisdiction.

Canada ranks high in international measurements of government transparency, quality of life, economic competitiveness, innovation, education and gender equality. It is one of the world's most diverse and multicultural nations, the product of large scale immigration. Canada's long relationship with the United States has had a significant impact on its history, economy, and culture.

Canada is recognised as a middle power for its role in international affairs, with a tendency to pursue multilateral solutions. Canada's peacekeeping role during the 20th century has had a significant influence on its global image.

Canada has abundant natural resources. The Atlantic Canada possesses vast offshore deposits of natural gas, and Alberta hosts the fourth largest oil reserves in the world. Its 165 billion barrels constitute 13 % of the world total. Canada is also among largest suppliers of agricultural products. The Canadian Prairies region is one of the most significant global producers of wheat, canola, and other grains. Canada is also a leading exporter of zinc, uranium, gold, nickel, platinoids, aluminium, steel,

iron ore, coking coal, lead, copper, molybdenum, cobalt, and cadmium. It has a sizeable manufacturing sector centred in southern Ontario and Quebec, with automobiles and aeronautics representing particularly important industries. The fishing industry is also a key contributor to the economy.

Canada is a developed country and has a highly developed mixed market economy, which is highly globalised. It is the ninth largest economy in the world. Its GDP nominal is 2.118 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 53,247 dollars, ranking 18th in the world. Its HDI is 0.936, rated as very high and is the 15th best in the world.

Canada has a well-developed international trade network and is rated among the world's largest trading nations. In 2021, Canadian trade in goods and services reached 2 trillion dollars. Its exports total 637 billion and imports 631 billion of which 390 billion originate from the USA. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the ninth largest by market capitalisation of 2 trillion dollars and listing over 1500 companies.

Canada was a founding member of the UN in 1945. In 1958, it formed the North American Aerospace Defence Command together with the US. It is also a member of the WTO, the Five Eyes, the G7, the OECD and the OAS. In addition, it is Signatory to 15 free trade agreements with 51 different countries.

CAPE VERDE

Republic of Cape Verde (Demonym: Cabo Verdian) has its Capital at Praia. It has a Population of: 550,000 in an Area of 4033. Its Languages are Portuguese and Creole and Religion: Christian 82%. Its Currency is Escudo.

Cape Verde is an island country in West Africa. It consists of ten volcanic islands in the central Atlantic Ocean. The islands lie between 600 and 850 kilometres west of Cape Vert, the westernmost point of the continental Africa. The Cape Verde islands form part of the Macaronesia ecoregion, along with the Azores, the Canary Islands, Madeira, and the Savage Isles. The islands of Cape Verde are in a V shape. Its most populated islands include Santiago housing the capital and the largest city Praia; Sao Antao, Fogo and Sal. Apart from Praia, Mindelo, Espargos and Assomada are its big cities.

The Cape Verde archipelago was uninhabited until the 15th century, when Portuguese explorers discovered and colonised the islands, thus establishing the first European settlement in the tropics. It gained independence from Portugal in 1975. Its population is mostly African with a minor European portion. The predominantly Roman Catholic population reflects the legacy of Portuguese rule.

Because the islands were conveniently located to play a role in the Atlantic slave trade, Cape Verde became economically prosperous during the 16th and 17th centuries, attracting merchants, privateers and pirates. It declined economically in the 19th century after the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade and many of its inhabitants emigrated during that period. A sizeable Cape Verdian diaspora community exists across the world, especially in the USA. It gradually recovered by becoming an important commercial centre and useful stopover point along major shipping routes.

Cape Verde is a unitary semi- presidential republic and its legislature is national assembly. Since the early 1990s, Cape Verde has been a stable representative democracy and has remained one of the most developed countries in Africa. Lacking natural resources, its economy is mostly service oriented, with a growing focus on tourism and foreign investment. 72 % of the Christian population adheres to Catholicism while Muslims represent 1.3 % of the total number of people. Its population density is 125. Its GDP nominal per capita is 4,500 dollars and its time is UTC + 1. It is a member of the African Union.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Abbreviated as CAR, Central African Republic (Demonym: Central African) has its Capital at Bangui. Its Population is 5.5 million in an Area of 622,984. Its Languages are French and Sango and Religion: Christian 73% and Muslim 14%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Central African Republic is a landlocked country in Central Africa. It is bordered by Chad to the north, Sudan to the northeast, South Sudan to the east, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the south, the Republic of Congo to the southwest and Cameroon to the west. Most of the country consists of Sudano-Guinean savannahs. There is also a Sahelo-Sudanian zone in the north and an equatorial forest zone in the south. Two thirds of the country is within the Ubangi River basin, flowing into the Congo, while the remaining third lies in the Chari basin flowing into Lake Chad. The capital Bangui is the largest city in the CAR and it lies at its border with the DRC.

What is today the Central African Republic has been inhabited since 8000 BC. Its borders were established by France, which ruled the country as a colony starting in the late 19th century. It gained independence from France in 1960.

After independence, it was ruled by a series of autocratic leaders, including an abortive attempt at a monarchy. First multiparty elections were held in 1993. Presently, the government in the Republic is unitary presidential with National Assembly as its legislature.

The CAR Bush War began in 2004 and despite peace treaties in 2007 and 2011, resumed in 2012. It was characterised by widespread and increasing abuses by various participating groups, such as arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and restrictions on freedom of press and movement.

The ethnic groups of the Republic include Baggara Arabs, Baka, Banda, Bayaka, Fula, Gula and Kara etc. The country is dependent on Cameroon for access to Atlantic Ocean and Sudan to reach the Red Sea.

Its population density is 7 and GDP nominal per capita is 540 dollars. Despite its significant mineral deposits and other resources, such as uranium reserves, crude oil, gold, diamonds, cobalt, lumber, and hydropower, as well as significant quantities of arable land, it is among the ten poorest countries in the world. It is 188th out of 191 countries in HDI. It is the unhealthiest country as well as the worst country in which to be young.

The CAR is a member of UN, AU, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Organisation of French speaking Countries and the NAM.

CHAD

Republic of Chad (Demonym: Chadian) has its Capital at Ndjamen. Its Population is 16 million in an Area of 1,284000. Its Languages are Arabic and French and Religion: Muslim 55%, Christian 41%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Named after a synonymous lake, Chad is a landlocked country at the crossroads of North and Central Africa. . It lies between 7N and 24N latitudes and 13E and 24E longitudes. It is bordered by Libya to the north; Sudan to the east; the Central African Republic to the south; Cameroon to the southwest; Nigeria to the southwest (at Lake Chad) and Niger to the west. It depends on Cameroon or Nigeria for access to Atlantic Ocean; Libya to enter the Mediterranean Sea, and Sudan for entry into the Red Sea. The capital Ndjamen is 1060 kilometres from the nearest port Douala in Cameroon. Chad is called the Dead Heart of Africa due to its desert and its distance from the sea.

By area, Chad falls between Peru and South Africa. It is the 5th largest country in Africa and 20th largest in the world. Apart from its desert zone in the north, there is an arid Sahelian belt in the centre. The more fertile Sudanian savannah zone is in the south. With an area of 17,000 square kilometres, Lake Chad is the largest wetland in the country and the second largest in Africa. The capital is also the most populous city, accommodating some 10 % of the national population.

Beginning in the 7th millennium BC the human population moved into the Chadian basin in vast numbers. By the end of the first millennium AD, a series of states and empires had risen and fallen in Chad's Sahelian strip. Each focussed on controlling the trans-Saharan trade routes that passed through the region. France conquered the territory by 1920 and incorporated it as part of French Equatorial Africa.

In 1960, Chad gained independence under the leadership of Francois Tombalbaye. Resentment against his policies in the Muslim north culminated in the long lasting civil war in 1965. Libya invaded Chad in 1978. The conflict was settled in the same year with French military intervention. In 1979, the rebels conquered the capital and put an end to the South's hegemony. But the rebel commanders fought among themselves until Hissene Habre defeated his rivals. Hissene Habre was overthrown in 1990 by his own general, Idriss Derby.

With French support, modernisation of armed forces was initiated in 1991. Since 2003, the Darfur crisis in Sudan has spilt over the border and destabilised the nation. Poor already, Chad struggled to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees living in eastern Chad. Chad remains plagued by political violence and attempted coups, but power remains with Derby and his political party, the Patriotic Salvation Movement.

Chad is home to over 200 ethnic groups. Sara, Arab, and Kanembu, each represent between 10 and 25 % of the population. Its population density is 14, HDI is low and time is UTC +1. Chad has a poor human rights record, with frequent abuses such as arbitrary imprisonment, extrajudicial killings, and limits on civil liberties by both security forces and armed militias.

With a GDP nominal of 700 dollars, Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world with high corruption index. Most of its citizens live in poverty as subsistence herders and farmers. Since 2003, oil has become primary export superseding cotton.

CHILE

Republic of Chile (Demony: Chilean) has its Capital at Santiago. Its Population is 20 million in an Area of: 756, 102. Its Language is Spanish and Religion: Christian 89%. Its Currency is Peso.

Chile is a country located in western South America. Stretching along a narrow strip of land between the Andes Mountains to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, it is the southernmost country in the world and the closest to Antarctica. It shares borders with Peru to the north, Bolivia to the northeast, Argentina to the east, and the Drake Passage to the far south. Its territory also includes several islands in the

Pacific. These include Juan, Fernandez, Isla Salas y Gomez, Desventuradas, and Easter Island. The country claims 1.25 million square kilometre area in Antarctica as the Chilean Antarctic Territory. The capital Santiago is its largest city.

Spain colonised the region in the mid-16th century, replacing Inca rule, but failed to conquer the independent Mapuche people who inhabited what is now South centre Chile. Chile emerged as a stable republic in the 1830s after the 1818 declaration of independence from Spain.

During the 19th century, the country experienced significant economic and territorial growth, putting an end to Mapuche resistance in the 1880s and gaining its current northern territory in the War of the Pacific of 1879-83 by defeating Peru and Bolivia.

Chile has the largest copper deposits and production in the world. In the 20th century, up until the 1970s, Chile underwent a process of democratisation and experienced rapid population growth and urbanisation, while relying increasingly on exports from copper mining to support its economy. During the 1960s and 70s, the country was marked by severe left-wing political polarisation and turmoil, which culminated in the 1973 Chilean coup that overthrew Salvador Allende's democratically elected left-wing government. This was followed by a 16-year right-wing military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet, which resulted in more than 3000 deaths or disappearances. The regime ended in 1990 following a referendum, and was succeeded by a centre-left coalition, which ruled until 2010.

Chile is a high income country and is one of the most economically and socially stable nations in South America. It leads Latin America in competitiveness, per capita income, globalisation, peace, and economic freedom. Chile also performs well in sustainability of state and democracy. It has the second lowest homicide rate in the Americas, following only Canada. Its population density is 24 and GDP nominal 350 billion dollars with a per capita value of 17,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.860, very high, and time is UTC-4 to UTC-6.

Chile is a member of the UN, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Pacific Alliance. It joined the OECD in 2010.

CHINA

Peoples Republic of China (Demonym: Chinese) has its Capital in Beijing. Its Population is 1.4 **billion** in an Area of 9,596,960. Its Languages are Mandarin and

some Local dialects and Religion: Buddhist 18% and Christian 5%. Its Currency is Yuan

Zhongguo is the most common Chinese name for China in modern times. It literally translates to central state or states. The official name, the People's Republic of China, is abbreviated to PRC.

China is in East Asia and has the longest combined border in the world, measuring 22,117 kilometres. China and Russia each share record land borders with 14 nations. China borders Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar in South East Asia; India, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia; Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia; and Russia, Mongolia and North Korea in Inner Asia. It also shares maritime boundaries with South Korea, Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

China had been the most populous country in the world. Only recently, it was overtaken by India and is now the second most populous. In area it is the third largest, spanning five time zones. It has 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions and 4 direct-controlled municipalities. It also has special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau. China is a nuclear state with the largest standing army and second largest defence budget in the world. It is widely characterised as a global power rivalling the US.

The region that is China has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic era. This is a period of human history that is also called the Old Stone Age. It is distinguished by the original development of stone tools and represents almost the entire period of human prehistoric technology.

The earliest Chinese dynastic states, such as the Shang and the Zhou emerged in the basin of the Yellow River before the second millennium BC. The eighth century BC saw a breakdown in Zhou authority and significant conflict as well as the emergence of Classical Chinese literature and philosophy. In 221 BC, China was unified under an emperor. This ushered in more than two millennia in which China was governed by one or more imperial dynasties. These include Han, Ming and Qing. This period witnessed the Chinese most notable achievements, such as the invention of gunpowder and paper, the establishment of the Silk Route, and the building of the Great Wall. The Chinese culture including languages, traditions, architecture and philosophy heavily influenced East Asia during this period.

In 1912, the Chinese monarchy was overthrown and the Republic of China established. The Republic witnessed persistent conflict between the Kuomintang Government and the Chinese Communist Party from 1937 until 1945. China was also involved in World War 2. The latter led to a temporary stop in the civil war and numerous Japanese atrocities such as the Nanking Massacre, which continue to influence China-Japan relations. In 1949, the CCP established control over China as the Kuomintang fled to Taiwan.

Early communist rule witnessed two major projects; the Great Leap Forward which resulted in a sharp economic decline, and the Cultural Revolution, a movement to purge all non-communist elements. This led to mass violence and persecution. Beginning in 1978, economic reforms were implemented but were cut short by Tiananmen Square protests. These ended in a massacre. Despite this event, the economy gained strength.

91 % Chinese are Han by ethnicity. 75 % Chinese have no religion and 2 % are Muslim. The population density in China is 145 per square kilometre.

China has been the foremost economic power throughout the arc of East Asian and global history. The country has had one of the largest economies in the world for most of the past two millennia. There was decline but only of temporary nature.

China has the largest economy by GDP at Purchasing Power Parity and the second largest by nominal GDP. Its GDP nominal per capita is 14,000 dollars. China accounts for 18 % of global economy. Economic growth has been 6 % consistently since 1978. The economy grew from 150 billion dollars in 1978 to 18 trillion dollars in 2022. Of the globally largest 500 companies, 142 are headquartered in China. The country is also the largest exporter and the second largest importer in the world. Major sectors of competitive strength include manufacturing, retail, mining, steel, textiles, automobiles, energy generation, green energy, banking, electronics, telecommunications, real estate, e-commerce and tourism. China has three of the ten largest stock exchanges in the world; Shanghai, Hong Kong and Shenzhen. These together have a market capitalisation of 16 trillion dollars. China has four out of ten top financial centres which is more than any other country. These are Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shenzhen.

China is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and an active partner of ASEAN plus mechanism. It is also a leading member of numerous formal and informal multilateral organisations including SCO, WTO, APEC, BRICS, BCIM and G-20. In addition, it is a member of several multilateral and regional organisations such as the Asian Development Bank, the Silk Road Fund, the New Development Bank, and East Asia Summit.

COLOMBIA

Republic of Colombia (Demonym: Colombian) has its Capital at Bogota. Its Population is 53 million in an Area of 1,141,748. Its Language is Spanish and Religion: Christian 87%. Its Currency is Peso.

Colombia is a country mostly in South America, with insular regions in North America. The Colombian mainland is bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the north; Venezuela to the east and northeast; Brazil to the southeast; Ecuador and Peru to the south and southwest; the Pacific Ocean to the west and Panama to the northwest. Its capital is the largest city hosting the main financial and cultural hub. Its other major cities include Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta, Cucuta, Ibagué, Villavicencio and Bucaramanga.

Colombia has a rich cultural heritage including language, religion, cuisine, and art. Its culture reflects its history as a colony. It fuses cultural elements of Europe and the Middle East, with those brought by the African diaspora as well as with those of the various indigenous civilisations that predate colonisation. Creole English and 64 other languages are recognised officially in the country.

Colombia has been home to many indigenous cultures since 12,000 BC. The Spanish first landed in 1499 in La Guajira. By the mid-16th century, they had colonised much of the present-day Colombia. They established the New Kingdom of Granada, with Santa de Bogotá as its capital. Independence from the Spanish Empire was achieved in 1819, with what is now Colombia emerging as the United Provinces of New Granada. The new polity experimented with federalism as the Grenadine Confederation in 1858 and then the United States of Colombia in 1863 before becoming the current Republic of Colombia in 1886. With the backing of the USA and France, Panama seceded from Colombia in 1903, resulting in Colombia's present borders. Since the 1960s, the country has been suffering from an asymmetric low intensity armed conflict and political violence, both of which escalated in the 1990s. Since 2005, there has been significant improvement in security, stability, and rule of law, as well as unpredicted economic growth and development. Colombia's healthcare system is the best in Latin America, with 22nd ranking in the world. Its diversified economy is the third largest in South America, with macroeconomic stability and favourable long-term growth prospective. Its GDP nominal is 363 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 7000 dollars.

Colombia is one of the world's leading 17 mega diverse countries. Its level of biodiversity is among the highest in the world. Its territory encompasses Amazon rainforest, highlands, grasslands and deserts. Colombia is the only country in South America with coastlines and islands along both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

88% of its people are Mestizo. 70% Christians are Catholic. Population density is 46; HDI is 0.7532, high, and time is UTC-5.

Colombia is a key member of major global and regional organisations including the UN, WTO, OECD, OAS, the Pacific Alliance and the Andean Community. It is also a NATO Global Partner, and a major non NATO ally of the USA.

COMOROS

Union of the Comoros (Demonym: Comoran) has its Capital at Moroni. Its Population is 1 million in an Area of 2170. Its Languages are Arabic and French and Religion: Muslim 98%, Christian 1%. Its Currency is Franc.

Comoros is an island country in the Indian Ocean located at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel. It is off the eastern coast of Africa between northeast Mozambique, the French region of Mayotte and northwest Madagascar. It is the only Arab country entirely south of the equator. Its location in Mozambique Channel is vital.

The Comoros is the third smallest country in Africa. It consists of three major islands, numerous smaller islands and all of the volcanic Comoro Islands except Mayotte which voted against independence from France in referendums held in 1974 and 2011. It thus continues to be administered by France which vetoed a UNSC resolution to affirm Comorian sovereignty over the island.

The Comoros were first settled by Austronesian people of Malagasy origin, Bantu speakers from East Africa, and seafaring Arab traders. A group of Comorans travelled to Hejaz in the early days of Islam and embraced the new religion. On their return, the remaining population too converted immediately.

It became part of the French colonial empire during the 19th century and achieved independence in 1975. It has experienced more than 20 coups, with heads of state assassinated at times.

Sunni Islam is the majority religion in Comoros. Comorans constitute 98 % of its population and population density is as high as 460.

There is gross income inequality in the country. 20 % of its population lives below poverty line. Its GDP nominal is 1.5 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1500 dollars. Its HDI is medium, and time, UTC + 3.

Comoros is a member of the Arab League, OIC, AU, French Community and Indian Ocean Commission.

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF

Republic of the Congo (Demonym: Republican Congolese) has its Capital at Brazzaville, its Population is 5.5 million in an Area of 342,000. Its Languages are French and Lingala and Religion: Christian 86% and Muslim 1%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Kinshasa and Brazzaville, the capitals of the two Congos are situated close by on opposite banks of the River Congo. The country is also known as Congo Brazzaville to differentiate it from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its official name is abbreviated to ROC.

Congo is located on western coast of Central Africa. It is bordered by Gabon to the west; Cameroon to the northwest; Central African Republic to the northeast; the Democratic Republic of Congo to the southeast and the Angolan exclave of Cabinda to the south. It has a small coastline in its south west on the Atlantic Ocean.

The region has been dominated by Bantu speaking tribes since at least 3000 years. They arrived into Congo River basin. It was formerly part of French colony of Equatorial Africa. Republic of Congo was established in 1958 and independence from France achieved in 1960. It was Marxist Leninist from 1969 till 1992 under the name Peoples Republic of Congo. Multiparty elections have been held since 1992. Out of 40 years, President Dennis Sassou has ruled for 35 years since 1979. Its population density is 17. Its HDI is medium and time UTC +1.

Congo has become the fourth largest oil producer in the Gulf of Guinea. It has achieved some prosperity despite political and economic instability and unequal distribution of wealth nationwide. Its economy is dependent on the oil sector and economic growth has slowed since the post 2015 drop in oil process. Its GDP nominal per capita is 2900 dollars. It is a member of AU, UN, La Francophonie, the Economic Community of Central African States and NAM.

COSTA RICA

Republic of Costa Rica (Demonym: Costa Rican) has its Capital at San Jose. Its Population is 5 million in an Area of 51100. Its Languages are Spanish and English and Religion: Christian 73%. Its Currency is Colon.

Costa Rica is a country in Central American region of North America. It is bordered by Nicaragua to the north; the Caribbean Sea to the northeast, Panama to the southeast and the Pacific Ocean to the southwest. It also shares maritime border with Ecuador to the south of its Cocos Island.

Costa Rica was inhabited by indigenous people before coming under Spanish rule in the 16th century. It remained a peripheral colony of the Empire until its independence in 1821 as part of the First Mexican Empire. The independence from this empire was achieved in 1823. This was followed by its membership in the Federal Republic of Central America, from which it formally declared independence in 1847. This was recognised by Spain in 1850.

Following the brief Costa Rican Civil War in 1948, it permanently abolished its army. It is a unitary presidential republic and has long standing stable democracy

Ethnic groups in Costa Rica include 84 % white and 7 % mulatto. 48 % Christians are Catholic and 23 % Protestant. Its population density is 220.

It has attained much higher human development including human equality than other countries at the same income levels. It has free press and is the 23rd happiest country in the world. It is also a major tourist destination. An estimated 333,000 people live in the capital San Jose, with around 2 million in its surrounding metropolitan area.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 16,000 dollars. Costa Rican economy once heavily dependent on agriculture, has diversified to include sectors such as finance, corporate services for foreign companies, pharmaceuticals, and ecotourism. Many foreign manufacturing and services companies operate in Costa Rica's Free Trading Zones where they benefit from investment and tax incentives. Over half of the investment comes from the USA. The zones support 150,000 jobs. The companies operative in the zones include Intel, Dell, HP, Bayer, Bosch, DHL, IBM and Okay industries. The wages in the zones are twice as much as rest of the country.

Its central location provides access to American markets and direct ocean access to Europe and Asia. Its most important exports are medical instruments, bananas, tropical fruits, integrated circuits and orthopaedic appliances. Its imports include petroleum, automobiles, medicine, broadcasting equipment and computers. Its total exports are worth 13 billion dollars per annum and imports 15 billion dollars. Pharmaceuticals, financial outsourcing, software development, and ecotourism have become the prime industries in the economy.

Its high education level makes the country attractive as investing location. Tourism earns more foreign exchange than the main cash crops including coffee, bananas and pineapples. It is the most visited nation in Central America with 3 million visitors per year. Pollution is controlled and beaurocracy is checked from becoming slow and cumbersome. The inflation in Costa Rica is moderate. However, the growing foreign debt and budget deficit are its major problems.

6 % of its GDP is generated by agriculture, 19 % by industry and 75 % by services. 21 % of its population lives below poverty line but living standards in general are high. Its health care is subsidised and housing affordable. It spends 7% of its budget on

education, global average being 4.5%. Its education system is known for quality and its literacy rate is 97 %. Creation of a skilled work force is a government priority but high school dropout rate is on the increase in the country. Courses are conducted in languages including English, Portuguese, Mandarin, and French. There are other courses on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

CROATIA

Republic of Croatia (Demonym: Croat) has its Capital at Zagreb. Its Population is 4 million in an Area of 56,594. Its Languages are Croatian and Serbian and Religion: Christian 88% and Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Kuna.

Croatia is a country at the crossroads of Central and South East Europe with Adriatic Sea to the southwest. It borders Slovenia to the northwest; Hungary to the northeast; Serbia to the east; and Bosnia and Montenegro to the southeast. It also shares maritime border with Italy. Croatia is important due to its long coast line on the Adriatic Sea. It has more than 1000 islands.

Marshal Tito, the former President of the united Yugoslavia was a Croat. Slovenia and Croatia broke away from former Yugoslavia. Both are Catholic majority nations.

The capital Zagreb is also the largest city in Croatia. Split, Rijeka and Osijek are its other major urban centres. 92 % of its population is Croat and 80 % of its Christians are Catholic. Its legislature is called Sabor.

The Croats arrived in modern day Croatia in the late 6th century, then part of Roman Illyria. It became a Dutchy in the 7th century and a Kingdom in 925. It united with Hungary in 1102 and became part of Habsburg monarchy in 1527. It seceded from Austria-Hungary in 1918 and became part of Yugoslavia in 1918. It gained independence in 1991 and joined the EU in 2013. Its population density is 70 and time UTC+1. Croatia is a republic and a parliamentary liberal democracy.

It is a developed country with an advanced high income economy and is 40th in HDI. Its GDP nominal is 80 billion dollars with a per capita figure of 21,000 dollars. Service, industry and agriculture dominate the economy and tourism is a significant source of revenue. It has heavily invested in infrastructure, especially transport routes and facilities along the Pan-European corridors. It provides its citizens with social security, healthcare and tuition-free education up to secondary level.

It is member of the EU, the Eurozone, the Schengen Area, NATO, the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the WTO. It is a founding member of the Union for the Mediterranean, and is currently in the process of joining the OECD.

CUBA

Republic of Cuba (Demonym: Cuban) has its Capital at Havana. Its Population is 11 million in an Area of 109, 884. Its Language is Spanish and Religion: Christian 59%. Its Currency is Peso.

Cuba is an island nation, comprising the island of Cuba, Isla de la Juventud, archipelagos, 4195 islands and cays surrounding the main island. It is located where the northern Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet. It lies east of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico; south of both the US State of Florida and the Bahamas; west of Hispaniola; and north of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. The western end of the island of Cuba lies on the Yucatan Channel, the shortest passage linking Gulf of Mexico to the Caribbean Sea.

The capital Havana is the largest city in Cuba. Its other major cities include Santiago de Cuba and Camaguey. Its area including its EEZ is 350,730 and it is the second most populous country in the Caribbean after Haiti.

The territory that is now Cuba was inhabited as early as the 4th millennium BC, with the Guanhatabey and Taino peoples inhabiting the area at the time of Spanish colonisation in the 15th century. Slavery was abolished in 1886. After the Spanish American War of 1898, Cuba was occupied by the USA. It gained independence in 1902. In 1940, Cuba implemented a new constitution, but mounting political unrest culminated in the 1952 Cuban coup and the subsequent dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. His government was overthrown in 1959 during the Cuban Revolution. This established communist rule under Fidel Castro. The country was a point of contention during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA. A nuclear war nearly broke out during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Following the dissolution of the USSR, Cuba faced severe economic downturn in the 1990s, known as the Special Period. In 2008, Fidel Castro retired after 49 years; Raul Castro was elected his successor. He was replaced in 2018 by Miguel Diaz-Canel.

Cuba is one of the few extant Marxist-Leninist one-party socialist states, in which the role of the vanguard Communist Party is enshrined in the Constitution. Opposition is not permitted. It is a multi-ethnic country and its customs derive from diverse origins, Spanish colonialism, enslaved Africans and communism.

Cuban population is 64 % white. The population density in Cuba is 100. Its GDP nominal is 150 billion dollars with a per capita value of 13,000 dollars. The economy is planned and dominated by tourism and exports of skilled labour, sugar, tobacco, and coffee. It has done well in literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy. However,

its 88 % population lives in extreme poverty and its food is nutrition deficient. Its HDI is 0.764, high and time is UTC-5.

Cuba is a founding member of the UN, G77, NAM, Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, ALBA, and OAS.

CYPRUS

Republic of Cyprus (Demonym: Cypriot) has its Capital at Nicosia. Its Population is 1.2 million in an Area of 9250. Its Languages are Greek and Turkish and Religion: Christian 73% and Muslim 25%. Its Currency is Euro.

Cyprus is an island nation in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is located south of Turkey; west of Syria and Lebanon; north of the Gaza Strip of the Palestinian territories, and southeast of Greece. It is geographically a part of West Asia, but its cultural ties and geopolitics are overwhelmingly Southeast European. Its ethnic groups include Greek, Turkish, Armenian and Maronite Cypriots.

Cyprus is the 3rd largest and the 3rd most populous island in the Mediterranean. Its capital is also its largest city. The north eastern portion is de facto governed by the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Its population density is 124 and time UTC + 2.

The earliest known human activity on the island dates to around the 10th millennium BC. Archaeological remains include the well- preserved ruins from the Hellenistic period. It was settled by Mycenaean Greeks in the second millennium. As a strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean, It was subsequently occupied by several major powers, including the empires of Assyrians, Egyptians and Persians, from whom the island was seized in 333 BC by Alexander the Great. Subsequent rule by Egypt, the Classical Roman Empire, Eastern Roman Empire, Arab caliphates for a short period, the French and the Venetians was followed by over three centuries of Ottoman rule between 1571 and 1878, de jure until 1914.

Cyprus was placed under the UK in 1878 and formally annexed in 1914. Differences arose between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Greeks wanted to join Greece and Turks Turkey. Following violence, Greece was granted independence by Britain in 1960. The crisis of 1964 brought further intercommunal violence between the two communities, displaced more than 25,000 Turkish Cypriots into enclaves and brought the end of Turkish Cypriot representation in the republic. In 1974, a coup de tat was staged by Greek Cypriot nationalists and elements of the Greek military junta in an attempt at enosis. This action precipitated the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, which led to the capture of the present day territory of Northern Cyprus and

the displacement of over 150,000 Greek Cypriots and 50,000 Turkish Cypriots. A separate Turkish Cypriot state in the north was established by unilateral declaration in 1983. Turkey recognised the new state.

Cyprus is a major tourist destination in the Mediterranean with an advanced, high income economy and a very high HDI. Its GDP nominal per capita is 35,000 dollars.

It has been a member of the Commonwealth since 1961 and was a founding member of the NAM until it joined the EU in 2004. In 2008, it joined Eurozone.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic (Demonym: Czech) has its Capital at Prague. Its Population is 11 million in an Area of 78,866. Its Languages are Czech and Slovak and Religion: Christian 12%. Its Currency is Koruna.

Czech Republic is located in Central Europe and is landlocked. It is bordered by Germany to the west; Austria to the south; Slovakia to the southeast, and Poland to the northeast. The capital is its largest city. Other major cities and urban areas include Brno, Ostrava, Plzen and Liberec.

Czech Republic is also known by its short name Czechia. The Duchy of Bohemia was founded in the late 9th century under Great Moravia. It was formally recognised as an Imperial State of the Holy Roman Empire in 1002 and became a kingdom in 1198. Following the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, all of the Crown lands of Bohemia were gradually integrated into the Habsburg monarchy. Nearly a hundred years later, the Protestant Bohemian Revolt led to the Thirty Years War. After the Battle of White Mountain, the Habsburg consolidated their rule. With the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the Crown lands became part of the Austrian Empire.

In the 19th century, the Czech lands became more industrialised, and in 1918 most of it became part of the First Czechoslovak Republic following the collapse of Austria-Hungary after World War 1. Czechoslovakia was the only country in Central and Eastern Europe to remain a parliamentary democracy during the entirety of the interwar period. After the Munich Agreement in 1938, Nazi Germany systematically took control over the Czech lands. Czechoslovakia was restored in 1945 and three years later became an Eastern Bloc communist state; following a coup d'état in 1948. Attempts to liberalise the government and economy were suppressed by a Soviet-led invasion of the country during the Prague Spring in 1968. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution ended communist rule in the country and restored democracy. In 1992, Czechoslovakia was peacefully dissolved, with its constituent states becoming the independent states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The Czech Republic is a unitary parliamentary republic and developed country with an advanced, high-income, export-oriented social market economy based in services, manufacturing and innovation. Services account for 60 % industrial sector 37 % and agriculture 3 % of the economy. The largest trading partner for both imports and exports is Germany and the EU in general. In 2018, the largest companies by revenue were; automobile manufacturer Skoda Auto, utility company CEZ Group, conglomerate Agrofert, energy trading company EPH, oil processing company Unipetrol, electronics manufacturer Foxconn CZ and steel producer Moravia Steel. Skoda Transportation is the 4th largest tram producer in the world; nearly one third of all trams in the world come from Czech factories.

It is a welfare state with a European social model, universal healthcare and free tuition university education. It ranks 32nd in the HDI. 89 % population is Czech and 9% Christians are Catholic. The parliament has senate and chamber of deputies. The population density is 133 and GDP nominal 326 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 30,000 dollars. Its time zone is UTC+ 1.

The Czech Republic is a member of the UN, NATO, the EU, the OECD, the OSCE, the CoE and the Visegrad Group.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Demony: Congolese) has its Capital at Kinshasa. Its Population is 103 million in an Area of 2,345,410. Its Languages are French and Lingala and Religion: Christian 96%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Franc.

Democratic Republic of the Congo is also known as Congo Kinshasa, DR Congo, DRC (the official acronym) or simply Congo. It was called Zaire from 1971 to 1997. It is centred on the Congo River Basin in Central Africa. It lies between latitudes 6N to 14S, and longitudes 12E to 32E. It is bordered by the Republic of Congo to the northwest; Central African Republic to the north; South Sudan to the northeast; Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi to the east; Tanzania to the south across Lake Tanganyika; Zambia to the south and southeast; Angola to the southwest, and South Atlantic Ocean and the Cabinda Exclave of Angola to the west.

Foraging is survival of the fittest, natural selection and the ability to reproduce. Hunter gathering is opposite of agriculture where animals and plants are domesticated. The Congo area was first inhabited by the forest people of Central Africa around 90,000 years ago. They are called African pygmies or Congo pygmies and are short statured people who have normal life and children. They are hunter-gatherers or forest people of Central Africa, mostly the Congo Basin, traditionally

subsisting on a forage and hunter-gatherer styles. It was reached by the Bantu expansion about 3000 years ago. The tribes in the DRC are Hutu 85 %, Tutsi 13 % and Twa 1 %.

A small European country namely Belgium had Congo, Rwanda and Burundi as its colonies till 1960s. Congo alone is 78 times bigger than Belgium. Its ivory and rubber were of special interest to the colonists. Belgium had 10 million Congolese killed because the locals failed to produce rubber in the amount desired by the imperialists. The Belgian royalty had been unwilling to admit to these excesses. Finally, in July, 2020, King Philippe did express regrets for the wrongs of his country.

DR Congo achieved independence from Belgium in 1960. Since 2015, the eastern DRC has been the scene of conflict. Some 6 million people died. DRC is the 4th most populous country in Africa and the most populous Francophone country of the world. Also, it is the largest Sub-Saharan as well as Francophone country in the world in area. In Africa as a whole, it is the second largest after Algeria. At world level, it is the 16th largest country.

DRC has low HDI. Its time is UTC + 1 and 2, and population density 48.

DRC has a GDP nominal per capita of 675 dollars. At independence it was the second most industrialised African nation after South Africa. It is extremely rich in natural resources. However, it has suffered from political instability; lack of infrastructure; corruption; centuries of commercial and colonial extraction, and exploitation, followed by more than 60 years of independence with little widespread development. It is the largest producer of cobalt ore in the world and a major producer of copper and diamonds. Its largest export is raw materials, with 50 % exports going to China. It is classified as a least developed country. 2 million children risk starvation, and fighting has displaced 4.5 million people. 600,000 of its refugees are living in neighbouring countries.

It is a member of the UN, NAM, COMESA, AU, SADC, La Francophonie, and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

DENMARK

Kingdom of Denmark (Demonym: Dane) has its Capital at Copenhagen. Its Population is 6 million in an Area of 42,943. Its Languages are Danish and Faroese and Religion: Christian 76%, Muslim 4%. Its Currency is Danish Krone.

Nordic countries are a geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and the Northern Atlantic Ocean, where they are most commonly known as Norden. The

term includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Apart from Greenland and the Faroe Islands, the term also includes the Aland Islands and Svalbard archipelagos that belong to Finland. The Nordic countries have much in common in their way of life, history, religion and social structure. They have a long history of political unions but do not form a single entity today.

Scandinavia is sometimes used as a synonym for the Nordic countries. This term more properly applies to the three monarchies of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Geologically, the Scandinavian Peninsula comprises the mainland of Norway and Sweden as well as the northernmost part of Finland. The Scandinavian movement sought to unite Denmark, Norway and Sweden into one country in the 19th century. With the independence of Finland in the early 20th century, and Iceland in the mid-20th century, this movement expanded into the modern organised Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Denmark is a Nordic country in the south-central portion of Northern Europe. It is the metropolitan part of and the most populous constituent of the Kingdom of Denmark, a constitutional unitary state that includes the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands and Greenland in the North Atlantic Ocean. Metropolitan Denmark is the southernmost of the Scandinavian countries lying south-west and south of Sweden, south of Norway, and north of Germany, with which it shares a short border, Denmark's only land border. Greenland is the largest island of the world. It is 50 times bigger than Denmark.

The Kingdom of Denmark, including the Faroe Islands and Greenland has a total of 1,419 islands greater than 100 square metres in area; 443 of these have been named and 78 are inhabited. Metropolitan Denmark consists of the northern part of the Jutland Peninsula and an archipelago of 406 islands. Of these the most populated is Zealand, on which the capital and largest city Copenhagen, is situated, followed by Funen, the North Jutland Island, and Amager. 800,000 people live in the capital and 2 million in its wider area. Denmark has flat, arable land, sandy coasts, low elevations, and a temperate climate. It exercises hegemonic influence in the Danish Realm, devolving powers to handle internal affairs. Home rule was established in the Faroe Islands in 1948 and in Greenland in 1979; the latter obtained further autonomy in 2009.

The Unified Kingdom of Denmark emerged in the 8th century as a political maritime power amid the struggle for control of the Baltic Sea. In 1397, it joined Norway and Sweden to form the Kalmar Union, which persisted until the latter's succession in 1523. The remaining Kingdom of Denmark-Norway endured a series of wars in the 17th century that resulted in further territorial cessions. A surge of nationalist movements in the 19th century were defeated in the First Schleswig War of 1848. The adoption of the Constitution of Denmark in 1849 ended the absolute monarchy and introduced the current parliamentary system. An industrialised exporter of agricultural produce in the second half of the 19th century, Denmark introduced social

and labour market reforms in the early 20th century, which formed the basis for the present welfare state model and advanced mixed economy. Denmark remained neutral during WW1. Danish neutrality was violated in WW2 by a rapid German invasion in 1940. During occupation, a resistance movement emerged in 1943. Iceland declared independence in 1944 and Denmark was liberated after the end of the war in 1945. In 1973, Denmark together with Greenland but not the Faroe Islands, became a member of what is now the EU, but negotiated certain opt outs such as retaining its own currency, the krone.

86 % of the population is Danish and remaining is mixed. 75 % Christians adhere to the Church of Denmark. Its population density is 138. Denmark is a developed country with a high standard of living. Its GDP nominal per capita is 70,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high and its time is UTC +1. On 21st August, 2019 the US President indicated interest in purchase of the island. The Danish PM resented this offer. In retaliation, President Trump postponed his Danish visit.

Denmark is a founding member of NATO, the Nordic Council, the OECD, the OSCE, and the UN, and is a part of the Schengen Area. It maintains close political, cultural, and linguistic ties with its Scandinavian neighbours, and the Danish language is partially intelligible with both the Norwegian and the Swedish languages.

DJIBOUTI

Republic of Djibouti (Demonym: Djiboutian) has its Capital at Djibouti itself. Its Population is 1 million in an Area of 23,200. Its Languages are French and Arabic and Religion: Muslim 94%, Christian 5%. Its Currency is Franc.

Djibouti is a country in the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by the disputed territory of Somaliland to the southeast, Ethiopia to the south and west, Eritrea to the south, and Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to the east. Somaliland is claimed by Somalia.

In antiquity, the territory, together with Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somaliland, was part of the Land of Punt. Nearby Zeila, now in Somaliland, was the seat of the medieval Adal and Ifat Sultanates. In the late 19th century, the colony of French Somaliland was established after the ruling Dir Somali sultans signed treaties with the French, and its railroad to Dire Dawa and later Addis Ababa, allowed it to quickly supersede Zeila as the port for southern Ethiopia and the Ogaden. It was renamed the French Territory of the Afars and Issas in 1967. A decade later, the Djiboutian people voted for independence. This officially marked the establishment of the Republic of Djibouti, named after its capital city. In the early 1990s, tensions over government

representation led to armed conflict, which ended in a power-sharing agreement in 2000 between the ruling party and the opposition.

Djibouti is a multi-ethnic nation with a population of a million, the smallest in mainland Africa. French and Arabic are its two official languages and an Afroasiatic language is used in local communication. The Somalis and Afars make up the two largest ethnic groups, with the former comprising 60 % and the latter 35 % of the population. Islam is the official religion and has been predominant in the region for more than 1000 years. There are 5 % Christians. Its population density is 37

Djibouti is near some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, controlling access to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. It serves as a key refuelling and transhipment centre, and the principal maritime port for imports from and exports to neighbouring Ethiopia. A burgeoning commercial hub, the nation is the site of various foreign military bases. Its GDP nominal is 4 billion dollars with a per capita value of 4000 dollars. Its HDI is low and time is UTC+ 3.

Djibouti joined the UN in its first year. The regional body of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has its headquarters in Djibouti City.

DOMINICA

Commonwealth of Dominica (Demonym: Dominican) has its Capital at Roseau. Its Population is 75,000 in an Area of 754. Its Languages are English and French and Religion: Christian 94%. Its Currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

Dominica is an island country in West Indies. It is part of Windward Islands which are a chain of the Lesser Antilles archipelago in Caribbean Sea. It is located near Guadeloupe to the northwest and Martinique to the southeast.

The island was settled by the Arawak arriving from South America in the 5th century. The Kalinago displaced the Arawak by the 15th century. Christopher Columbus is said to have passed the island in 1493. It was later colonised by Europeans, predominantly by the French from the 1690s to 1763. The French imported enslaved people from West Africa to work on coffee plantations. Britain took its possession in 1763 after the Seven Years War, and English was established English as its official language. It gained independence from the UK and became part of the West Indies Associated States in 1967. It achieved sovereignty in 1978.

Dominica sits at the entrance to the Caribbean from the Atlantic Ocean. Dominican Republic is Spanish speaking and Dominica is English. Its ethnic groups include 75% Africans and 20% multiracial communities. Its population density is 105.

Its GDP nominal per capita hit the lowest value in 2008 but is presently 10,000 dollars. Growth started mainly due to tourism, construction, offshore and other services and banana industry. Vulnerable to weather conditions, agriculture was diversified to produce coffee, flowers and fruits like mangos, papaya and guava. The country is becoming a major international financial centre as it offers an official economic citizenship to those seeking a valid second citizenship.

Dominica is a beneficiary of the Caribbean Basin Initiative that grants duty free entry into the USA for many goods. It also belongs to the predominantly English speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dominican Republic (Demonym: Dominican Republican) has its Capital at Santo Domingo. Its Population is 11 million in an Area of 48730. Its Language is Spanish and Religion: Christian 88%. Its Currency is Peso.

Dominican Republic is a country located on the island of Hispaniola lying in the Greater Antilles archipelago of the Caribbean Sea. It occupies 63% area of Hispaniola Island which it shares with Haiti. Dominican Republic is the eastern neighbour of Haiti on the island. Hispaniola and Saint Martin are the only two islands in the Caribbean that are shared by two sovereign states. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north.

Being geographically diverse, the Dominican Republic is home to both the Caribbean's tallest mountain peak, Pico Duarte, and the largest lake and lowest point, Lake Enriquillo. Its average temperature is 26C and it has great climatic and biological diversity. It is the site of the first cathedral, castle, monastery, and fortress built in the Americas. It is highly vulnerable to natural disasters.

Dominican Republic is the second largest in area as well as population in the Caribbean after Cuba. It speaks Spanish while Haiti is the only French speaking nation in Americas. 3.6 million People live in its capital. Apart from Spanish, Haitian Creole and Samana English are the other languages used in the country. 74 % population of the country is mixed, 18 % white and 8 % black. Its government is unitary presidential republic.

The native Taino people had inhabited Hispaniola before the arrival of Europeans. Christopher Columbus explored and claimed the island for Castile, landing there on his first voyage in 1492. The colony of Santo Domingo became the site of the first permanent European settlement in the Americas and the first seat of Spanish colonial rule in the New World. In 1697, Spain recognised French dominion over the western third of the island, which became the independent state of Haiti in 1804.

The Dominican people declared independence from Spain in 1821, but were forcefully annexed by Haiti. Independence came 22 years later in 1844 after victory in the Dominican War of independence. Over the next 72 years, the Dominican Republic experienced several civil wars, failed invasion by Haiti, and a brief return to Spanish colonial status, before permanently ousting the Spanish during the Dominican War of Restoration in 1865. The US occupied the country between 1916 and 1924 due to threat of its defaulting on foreign debts, a subsequent calm and prosperous six year period under Horacio Vasquez followed.

From 1931 the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo ruled until his assassination in 1961. Juan Bosch was elected president in 1962 but was deposed in a military coup in 1963. A civil war in 1965, the last in the country, was ended by US military intervention and was followed by the authoritarian rule of Joaquin Balaguer. Since 1978, the Dominican Republic has moved towards representative democracy.

Its population density is 220. Its GDP nominal per capita is 12,000 dollars and time UTC – 4. The Dominican Republic has the largest economy in the Caribbean and Central American region and is the seventh largest in Latin America. Over the last 25 years, the Dominican Republic has had the fastest growing economy in the Western Hemisphere. Growth has been driven by construction, manufacturing, tourism and mining. The country is the site of the third largest gold mine in the world, the Pueblo Viejo mine. During the last three decades, the economy, formerly dependent on the export of agricultural commodities; mainly sugar, cocoa and coffee, has transitioned to a diversified mix of services, manufacturing, agriculture, mining and trade. The service sector accounts for almost 60 % of the GDP and manufacturing 22 %. Tourism, telecom and finance are the main components of the service sector. However, none of them accounts for more than 10 % of the whole. Dominican Republic is the most visited destination in the Caribbean. The year round golf courses and resorts are major attractions.

High unemployment and income inequality are its long term challenges. International migration affects the country greatly, as it receives and sends large flows of migrants. Mass illegal Haitian immigration and the integration of Dominicans of Haitian descent are major issues. It has a large diaspora in the US. There are close to 100,000 slaves in the country.ⁱ

EAST TIMOR

Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (Demonym: Timorese) has its Capital at Deli. Its Population is 1.3 million in an Area of 14874. Its Languages are Tatum and Portuguese and Religion: Christian 99%. Its Currency is Dollar.

East Timor is a country in Southeast Asia. It is the eastern half of Timor Island, of which the western half is administered by Indonesia. It also has the exclave of Oecusse on the island's north-western half, and the minor islands of Atauro and Jaco. It has Australia to the south across Timor Sea. Its capital is its largest city.

East Timor was settled by waves of Austronesian and Papuan peoples. The diverse mix of cultures and languages reflects its links to Southeast Asia and Melanesia despite its small area. East Timor came under Portuguese influence in the 16th century and remained a Portuguese colony until 1975. Internal conflict preceded a unilateral declaration of independence and an Indonesian invasion and annexation. Resistance to Indonesian rule continued throughout and, in 1999, a UN sponsored act of self-determination led to Indonesia relinquishing control of the territory. In 2002, as Timor Leste, it became the first new sovereign state of the 21st century. That same year, relations with Indonesia were established and normalised, with Indonesia also supporting East Timor's accession into ASEAN.

Its population density is 90 and GDP nominal 2 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1500 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time is UTC + 9. The country is relatively poor, with an economy that relies heavily on natural resources, especially oil, and foreign aid. Aside from oil, coffee is one of the largest exports of the country. Its access to internet and direct international flights are limited but its democracy and human rights records are excellent. Flights operate to the country from Singapore, Bali and Darwin.

Its population is young due to high fertility rate and literacy high. Apart from the Catholic majority, local beliefs are followed particularly in rural areas.

East Timor is a member of the Community of the Portuguese Language Countries, an observer of the Pacific Islands Forum and UN.

ECUADOR

Republic of Ecuador (Demonym: Ecuadorian) has its Capital at Quito. It has a Population of 17 million in an Area of 283,560. Its Languages are Spanish and Quechua and Religion: Christian 87%. Its Currency is Sucre.

Meaning Equator in Spanish, Ecuador lies on the Equator in north western South America. It is bordered by Colombia to the north, Peru to the east and south; and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Ecuador also includes Galapagos Islands in Pacific 1000 kilometre west of the mainland. Its largest city is Guayaquil. Its population is 78 % Mestizo and 70 % Christians are Catholic. The territories of the modern-day Ecuador were once home to a variety of indigenous peoples that were gradually incorporated into the Inca Empire during the 15th century. The territory was colonised by Spanish Empire during the 6th century. It achieved independence in 1820, as part of Gran Colombia, from which it emerged as a sovereign state in 1830. The legacy of both empires is reflected in its ethnically diverse population, with Mestizo majority and European, Native American, African and Asian minorities. It is a democratic presidential republic and a developing country.

Its economy is heavily dependent on exports of commodities, primarily petroleum and agricultural products. Poverty is gradually declining. Its HDI is 0.740, high and time is UTC-5. Its population density is 70 and GDP Nominal 122 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 6533 dollars. It is a founding member of the UN, OAS, Mercosur, Prosur and the NAM.

EGYPT

Arab Republic of Egypt (Demonym: Egyptian) has its Capital at Cairo. Its Population is 120 million in an Area of 1,010,408. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 95%, Christian 5%. Its Currency is Pound.

Egypt is significant due its location, population, Suez Canal and history. It is considered to be a regional power in North Africa, the Middle East and the Muslim world, and a middle power worldwide.

It is a transcontinental country spanning the northeast corner of Africa and the Sinai Peninsula in the southwest corner of Asia. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north; the Gaza Strip and Israel to the northeast; Gulf of Aqaba and Red Sea to the east; Sudan to the south and Libya to the west. There are countries which do not share a boundary with Egypt but are in its vicinity. Across Gulf of Aqaba is Jordan; across Red Sea is Saudi Arabia; and across Mediterranean are Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. Its time is UTC + 2.

The capital Cairo is the largest city in Egypt. Alexandria, the second largest city, is an important industrial and tourist hub at the Mediterranean coast.

With a population density of 103, it is the 3rd most populous country in Africa after Nigeria and Ethiopia and the most populous Arab country. At the world level, it is 14th largest by population. The great majority of Egyptians live near the banks of the Nile River, an area of about 40,000 square kilometres, where the only arable land is found. About 43 % of residents live across the densely populated cities in the Nile Delta including Cairo and Alexandria. The large regions of the Sahara desert, which constitutes most of the Egyptian territory, are sparsely inhabited.

Egypt has one of the longest histories of any nation, tracing its heritage along the Nile Delta back to the era between the 6th and the 4th millennia BC. Considered a cradle of civilisation, the Ancient Egypt saw some of the earliest developments of writing, agriculture, urbanisation, organised religion and central government. Egypt's long and rich cultural heritage is an integral part of its national identity, which reflects its unique transcontinental location being simultaneously Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and North African. Egypt was an early and important centre of Christianity. It was largely Islamised in the seventh century.

Modern Egypt dates back to 1922, when it gained independence from the British Empire as a monarchy. Following the 1952 revolution, Egypt declared itself a republic, and in 1958 it merged with Syria to form the United Arab Republic, which dissolved in 1961. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, Egypt endured social and religious strife and political instability; having several armed conflicts with Israel in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, and occupying the Gaza Strip intermittently until 1967. In 1978, Egypt signed the Camp David Accords, officially withdrawing from Gaza and recognising Israel.

After the Arab spring, which led to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, the country faced a protracted period of political unrest. This included the election in 2012 of a brief Islamist government spearheaded by Muhammad Morsi, and its subsequent overthrow after mass protests in 2013. Currently, Egypt is a semi-presidential republic led by President Abdel Fattah El Sisi since his election in 2014. He is described as authoritarian.

Egypt is a developing country having a diversified economy. Its nominal GDP of 400 billion dollars is the third largest in Africa. Its per capita value is 4000 dollars and HDI high. Egypt is a founding member of the UN, NAM, the Arab League, AU, OIC, World Youth forum, and a member of BRICS.

EL SALVADOR

Republic of El Salvador (Demonym: Salvadoran) with Capital San Salvador has a Population of 6 million in an Area of 21040. Its Languages are Spanish and Nahua and Religion: Christian 84%. Its Currency is US Dollar.

El Salvador is in Central America. It borders Honduras to the north east, Guatemala to the northwest and Pacific to the south. It is the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America. Its population density is 324. Its capital San Salvador is also its largest city. Its ethnic groups include Mestizo 86% and white 13%. 45 % of its Christians are Catholic and 37 % Protestant. 15 % its population adheres to no religion. Its government is unitary presidential republic.

Among the Mesoamerican nations that historically controlled the region are the Mayans and then the Cuzcatlecs. Archaeological monuments also suggest an early Olmec presence around the first millennium BC. In the beginning of the 16th century, the Spanish Empire conquered the Central American territory, incorporating it into the Viceroyalty of New Spain ruled from Mexico City. However, the Viceroyalty had little to no influence in the daily affairs of the Isthmus, which was colonised in 1524. In 1609, the area was declared the Captaincy General of Guatemala by the Spanish, which included the territory that would become El Salvador until its independence from Spain in 1821. It was forcibly incorporated into the First Mexican Empire, and then seceded, joining the Federal Republic of Central America in 1823. When the federation dissolved in 1841, it became a sovereign state, and then formed a short lived union with Honduras and Nicaragua called the Greater Republic of Central America, which lasted from 1895 to 1898.

From the late 19th to the mid-20th century, it endured chronic political and economic instability characterised by coups, revolts, and a succession of authoritarian rulers. Persistent socioeconomic inequality and civil unrest culminated in the Salvadorian Civil War from 1979 to 1992, fought between the military-led government backed by the US, and a coalition of left wing guerrilla groups. The conflict ended with the Chapultepec Peace Accords. This negotiated settlement established a multiparty constitutional republic, which remains in place to date. During the civil war, large numbers of Salvadorans immigrated to the US. By 2008, they were one of the largest immigrant groups in the US.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 5500 dollars. The economy has historically been dominated by agriculture, beginning with the Spanish taking control of the indigenous cacao crop in the 16th century, along with balsam. This was followed by a boom in use of indigo plant in the 19th century, mainly for its use as a dye. Thereafter, the focus shifted to coffee, which by the early 20th century accounted for 90 % of the export earnings. El Salvador has since reduced its dependence on coffee and embarked on diversification of the economy by opening up trade and financial links; and expanding the manufacturing sector. Economic improvements led to lowest

income equality among nearby countries. The economy has been hampered by natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, government subsidies and official corruption. The service sector is 64%; industrial sector 25 % and agriculture sector 11 % of GDP.

In the past gold and silver were produced in the country. Recent attempts to reopen mining failed. Like other former colonies, it was considered a mono export economy based on indigo. After invention of synthetic indigo in the 19th century, coffee became the main export. Its total exports are 4 billion dollars and imports 8 billion dollars. The country leads the region in remittances per capita from its citizens abroad, particularly 2.5 million Salvadoran nationals living in the USA. These amount to 6 billion dollars and a third of all households receive remittances.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Republic of Equatorial Guinea (Demonym: Equatoguinean) with Capital Malabo has a Population of 1.7 million in an Area of 28,050. Its Languages are Spanish and French and Religion: Christian 88%, Muslim 4%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Equatorial Guinea is a country situated on the west coast of Central Africa. It is bordered by Cameroon to the north, Gabon to the south and east and Atlantic Ocean to the west. It is the only sovereign African state in which Spanish is the official language. Formerly, it was called Spanish Guinea. It gained independence in 1968. Its post-independence name evokes its proximity to the Equator as well as Gulf of Guinea. It is thinly populated and is important due to its access to sea.

Equatorial Guinea consists of two parts; an insular and a mainland region. The insular region consists of the islands of Bioko, formerly Fernando Po, in the Gulf of Guinea, and Annobon, a small volcanic island which is the only part of the country south of the equator. Bioko Island is the northernmost part of the Equatorial Guinea and is the site of the capital Malabo. The Portuguese speaking island nation of Sao Tome and Principe is located between Bioko and Annobon.

The mainland region, Rio Muni is bordered by Cameroon to the north and Gabon to the south and east. It is the location of Bata, Equatorial Guinea's largest city and Ciudad de la Paz, the planned future capital of the country. Rio Muni also includes several small offshore islands, such as Corisco, Elobey Grande, and Elobey Chico. After independence, Equatorial Guinea was ruled by Francisco Macias Nguema. He declared himself president for life in 1972, but was overthrown in a coup in 1979 by his nephew Teodoro Mbasogo who has served as president since. Both presidents are labelled as dictators.

Equatorial Guinea has become one of the sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil producers and the richest country per capita in Africa. Its GDP nominal is 10 billion dollars with a per capita value of 6500 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 1. However, only a handful benefit from the riches due to the wealth distribution being extremely unequal. Less than half of the population has access to clean drinking water and as many as 8 % children die before the age of 5. Human trafficking is a significant problem in the country.

Being a former Spanish colony, the country uses Spanish as the main official language. French and Portuguese are also official but not widely used. Aside from the partially recognised Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, it is the only country situated entirely in Africa in which Spanish is an official language. Spanish is also spoken in the African parts of Spain; the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla. 86 % people are Fang and 7 % Bubi by ethnicity.

The country is a member of the AU, the Francophonie, the OPEC and the CPLP.

ERITREA

Republic of Eritrea (Demonym: Eritrean) with Capital Asmara has a Population of 5.2 million in an Area of 120,000. Its Languages are Tigrinya and Arabic and Religion: Christian 63%, Muslim 37%. Its Currency is Birr.

Eritrea is a country in the Horn of Africa and is bordered by Sudan to the west, Ethiopia to the east, and Djibouti to the south east.

Eritrea remained under Italian, British and then Ethiopian control. Its northeastern and eastern regions have a long coastline along the Red Sea. Eritrea sits next to Bab-el-Mendeb. With Eritrean separation, Ethiopia became landlocked and inaccessible from Saudi Arabia. .

Human remains found in Eritrea have been dated to 1 million years old and anthropological research indicates that the area may contain significant records related to the evolution of humans. The Kingdom of Aksum, covering much of modern-day Eritrea and northern Ethiopia, was established during the first or second century AD. It adopted Christianity around the middle of the fourth century. Beginning in the 12th century, the Ethiopian Zagwe and Solomonid dynasties held sway to a fluctuating extent over the entire plateau and the Red Sea coast. Eritrea's central highlands, known as Mereb Melash were the northern frontier region of the Ethiopian kingdoms and were ruled by a governor titled the Bahr Negash.

In the 16th century, the Ottomans conquered the Eritrean coastline. Beginning in 1882-1885, Italian troops systematically spread out from Massawa toward the highland, eventually forming the colony of Italian Eritrea in 1889. After the WW2, Eritrea was administered by the British Military Administration until 1952. Following the UN General Assembly decision in 1952, Eritrea governed itself but for foreign affairs and defence, it was to enter into a federal status with Ethiopia for ten years. However, in 1962, Ethiopia annulled the Eritrean parliament and formally annexed Eritrea. A secessionist movement, Eritrean Liberation Front, was organised in 1961. It fought for independence which was achieved in 1991. Eritrea is multi-ethnic. It has 50 % Tigrinya and 30 % Tigre population. Its GDP nominal is 2 billion dollars with a per capita value of 566 dollars. Its HDI is low and time is UTC + 3. It is a member of the UN and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. It is an observer state in the Arab League alongside Brazil and Venezuela.

ESTONIA

Republic of Estonia (Demonym: Estonian) with Capital Tallinn has a Population of 1.3 million in an Area of 45,226. Its Languages are Estonian and Russian and Religion: Christian 27%. Its Currency is Euro.

The three Baltic States Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are Catholic countries which became independent on disintegration of the former Soviet Union in 1990. Estonia is located on the eastern shore of Baltic Sea in Northern Europe. Gulf of Finland lies to its north with Finland across and Baltic Sea is to its west with Sweden across. It shares land borders with Latvia to the south and Russia to the east. Lake Peipus too lies to its east. The territory of Estonia includes the mainland, the larger islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa plus over 2,300 islands and islets on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. 68 % of its population is Estonian and 23% Russian. Its population density is a mere 30. Time zone in Estonia is UTC+3.

The land of what is now modern day Estonia has been inhabited by humans since at least 9000 BCE. The medieval indigenous population of Estonia was one of the last pagan civilisations in Europe to adopt Christianity following the Papal-sanctioned Livonian Crusade in the 13th century. After centuries of successive rule by the Teutonic Order, Denmark, Sweden, and the Russian Empire, a distinct Estonian national identity began to emerge in the mid-19th century. This culminated in the 1918 Estonian Declaration of Independence from the then warring Russian and German Empires. Democratic throughout most of the interwar period, Estonia declared neutrality at the outbreak of WW2. However, the country was repeatedly contested, invaded, and occupied, first by the Soviet Union in 1940, then by Nazi

Germany in 1941, and was ultimately reoccupied in 1944 by, and annexed into the USSR as an administrative subunit, Estonian SSR. Throughout the 1944 to 1991 Soviet occupation, Estonia's de jure state continuity was preserved by diplomatic representatives and the government in exile. Following the bloodless Estonian Singing Revolution of 1988 to 1990, the nation's de facto independence from the Soviet Union was restored in 1991. Presently, it is a democratic unitary parliamentary republic.

Estonia is a developed country with a high income economy ranked 31st in the HDI. It has consistently ranked high in quality of life, education, press freedom, digitalisation of public services and the prevalence of technology companies. Its GDP Nominal is 41 billion dollars with a per capita value of 33,000 dollars. It is one of the least populous members of the EU, the Eurozone, the OECD, the Schengen Area and NATO.

ESWATINI

Kingdom of Eswatini (Demonym: Swazi) with Capital Mbabane has a Population of 1.2 million in an Area of 17,363. Its Languages are English and Swazi and Religion Christian 88%. Its Currency is Emalangeni.

Eswatini is a landlocked microstate in Southern Africa. It borders Mozambique to the northeast and South Africa on all other sides. At 200 kilometres north-south length and 130 kilometres east-west width, Eswatini is one of the smallest countries in Africa. Despite being small, its climate and topography are diverse, ranging from a cool and mountainous Highveld to a hot and dry lowveld.

Its population is primarily composed of ethnic Swazis who established their kingdom in the mid-18th century under the leadership of Ngwane 3. The country and Swazis take their name from Mswati 2, the 19th century king under whose rule the country was expanded and unified. Its boundaries were drawn up in 1881 in the midst of the Scramble for Africa. After the Second Boer War, the kingdom under the name of Swaziland was a British high commission territory from 1903 until it regained its independence in 1968. In 2018, the official name was changed to Kingdom of Eswatini, mirroring the name commonly used in Swazi. 84 % of its people are Swazi and 10 % Zulu. 90 % Christians are Protestant. Its population density is 67.

Eswatini is a developing country and is classified as a lower-middle income economy. As a member of the Southern African Customs Union and the Common Market for Stern and Southern Africa, its main local trading partner is South Africa. To ensure economic stability, Eswatini currency is pegged to the South African currency. Its major overseas trading partners are the USA and the EU. The majority of employment is provided by its agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Its GDP

nominal is 4 billion dollars with a per capita value of 4000 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time zone UTC + 2. Due to widespread genital diseases and tuberculosis, its life expectancy is as low as 58. It is a member of the SADC, the AU, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the UN.

ETHIOPIA

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Demony: Ethiopian) with Capital Addis Ababa has a Population of 130 million in an Area of 1,112,000. Its Languages are Amharic and Tigrinya and Religion: Christian 67% and Muslim 31%. Its Currency is Birr

Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa region of East Africa. It is bordered by Eritrea to the north, Djibouti to the northeast, Somalia to the northeast, east and southeast, Kenya to the south, South Sudan to the west, and Sudan to the northwest. The capital is its largest city and it lies several kilometres west of the East African Rift that splits the country into the African and Somali tectonic plates.

Ethiopia is the 13th most populous country in the world. In Africa, it is the 2nd most populous after Nigeria. Among landlocked countries it tops the world in population. It is the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993 that rendered the latter landlocked. Being the only Christian country in the Muslim belt of Asia, Africa and Europe, it was categorized by Samuel Huntington as a **lone** country.

Anatomically modern humans emerged from modern day Ethiopia and set out for the Near East and elsewhere in the Middle Palaeolithic period. South-western Ethiopia has been proposed as a possible homeland of the Afroasiatic language family. Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country and one of the oldest in the world with over 3,000 years of history. Apart from a five-year occupation by Mussolini's Italy, Ethiopia has never been colonised. In 980 BC, the Kingdom of D'mit extended its realm over Eritrea and the northern region of Ethiopia, while the Kingdom of Aksum maintained a unified civilisation in the region for 900 years. Christianity was embraced by the kingdom in 330, and Islam arrived by the First Hire in 615. After the collapse of Aksum in 960, the Zagwe dynasty ruled the north-central parts of Ethiopia until being overthrown by Yekuno Amlak in 1270 who inaugurated the Ethiopian Empire and the Solomonic dynasty, claiming descent from the biblical Solomon and Queen of Sheba under their son Menelik I. By the 14th century, the empire had grown in prestige through territorial expansion and fighting against adjacent territories, most notably, the Ethiopian-Adal War of 1529-1543 contributed to fragmentation of the empire, which ultimately fell under a decentralisation known as Zemene Mesafint in the mid-18th century. Emperor Tewodros 2 ended Zemene

Mesafini at the beginning of his reign in 1855, marking the reunification and modernisation of Ethiopia.

From 1878 onwards, Emperor Menelik 2 launched a series of conquests known as Menelik Expansion, which resulted in the formation of Ethiopia's current border. Externally, during the late 19th century, Ethiopia defended itself against foreign invasions, including from Egypt and Italy; as a result, Ethiopia preserved its sovereignty during the Scramble for Africa. In 1936, Ethiopia was occupied by Fascist Italy and annexed with Italian-possessed Eritrea and Somaliland, later forming Italian East Africa. In 1941, during WW2, it was occupied by the British Army. Its full sovereignty was restored in 1944 after a period of military administration. The Derg, a Soviet-backed military junta, took power in 1974 after deposing Emperor Haile Selassie and the Solomonic dynasty, and ruled the country for nearly 17 years amidst the Ethiopian Civil War. Following the dissolution of the Derg in 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) dominated the country with a new constitution and ethnic based federalism. Since then, Ethiopia has suffered from prolonged and unresolved interethnic clashes and political instability marked by democratic backsliding. From 2018, regional and ethnically based factions carried out armed attacks in multiple on-going wars throughout Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state with over 80 different ethnic groups. 45 % of its population is Oromo, 27 % Amhara and 6 % Somali. 44 % Christians are Ethiopian Orthodox and 23 % Pantay. Its population density is 93.

Ethiopia is one of the least developed countries but is sometimes considered an emerging power, having the fastest economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa. This is due to FDI in expansion of agricultural and manufacturing industries. Agriculture is the largest economic sector, accounting for 36 % of the GDP. However, in terms of per capita income and HDI, the country is regarded as poor, with high rates of poverty, poor respect for human rights, widespread ethnic discrimination, and a literacy rate of 49 %. GDP nominal is 192 billion dollars with a per capita value of 2000 dollars. HDI is low and time, UTC+3.

It is a founding member of the UN, the Group of 24, the NAM, the Group of 77, and AU. Addis Ababa is the headquarters of the AU, the Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the African Standby Force and many of the global non-governmental organisations focused on Africa. Ethiopia became a full member of BRICS IN 2024.

FIJI

Republic of Fiji (Demony: Fijian) with Capital Suva has a Population of 1 million in an Area of 18,270. Its Languages are English, Fijian and Hindi and Religion: Christian 64%, Hindu 28%. Its Currency is Fijian Dollar.

Fiji is an island nation in Melanesia, a part of Oceania in the South Pacific. It is 2,000 kilometres northeast of New Zealand's North Island. Some of its neighbours are Vanuatu to the west; the French territory New Caledonia to the south west; Tonga to the east; Samoa to the north east and Tuvalu to the north.

Fiji has 900 islands and islets. 100 of these are permanently inhabited. Its two major islands account for 90% of its population. The capital serves as the principal port.

Austronesians and Melanesian people lived in Fiji between 3500 and 1000 BC. Europeans arrived in 17th century. The Dutch arrived first but British colonised Fiji in the late 19th century. British forced themselves on Fiji by killing the locals at will. Conversion of Fijians to Christianity was mostly at gunpoint.

There was influx of people from the USA and Australia in the wake of the American Civil War in 1860s. The refugees came to grow cotton that had risen in price in America. They acquired land fraudulently in exchange for alcohol and weapons. Independence from the UK was achieved in 1970.

57 % population in Fiji is Fijian and 40 %t Indian. The Indian indentured labourers were brought into Fiji first in 1879. They were imported by the British imperialists for sugar plantation. They settled well in Fiji. However, there are ethnic tensions between the local Fijians and the Indian immigrants.

GDP nominal per capita in Fiji is 5,400 dollars. Endowed with forest, mineral and fish resources, Fiji is one of the most developed economies in the Pacific Ocean. Urbanisation and expansion in the service sector have contributed to its GDP growth. Sugar exports and tourism are its major sources of foreign exchange. Its long term problems include low investment and uncertain property rights.

FINLAND

Republic of Finland (Demony: Finn) with Capital Helsinki has a Population of 5.6 million in an Area of 338,145. Its Languages are Finnish and Swedish and Religion: Christian 69%, Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Euro.

Finland is a Nordic country in Northern Europe. It borders Sweden to the northwest, Norway to the north, and Russia to the east, with the Gulf of Bothnia to the west and

the Gulf of Finland to the south opposite Estonia. The capital Helsinki is a mere 388 kilometres west of the Russian city of Saint Petersburg.

Finland was first settled around 9000 BC after the last Ice Age. During the Stone Age, various cultures emerged in it, distinguished by different styles of ceramics. The Bronze Age and Iron Ages were marked by its contacts with other cultures in Fennoscandia and the Baltic region. In the late 13th century, Finland became part of the Swedish Empire as a result of the Northern Crusades. In the Finnish War of 1809, Sweden lost Finland and it became the Grand Duchy of Finland as an autonomous state ruled by the Russian Empire. During this period, Finnish art flourished and the idea of full independence began to take hold. In 1906, Finland became the first European state to grant universal suffrage, and the first in the world to give all adult citizens the right to run for public office. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Finland declared its full independence. In 1918 the young nation was divided by the Finnish Civil War. During WW2, Finland fought against the Soviet Union in the Winter War, and later against Nazi Germany in the Lapland War. As a result, it lost parts of its territory but retained its independence.

Finland remained a largely agricultural country until the 1950s. After WW2, it industrialised quickly and established an advanced economy, with a welfare state built on the Nordic model. This allowed the country to experience overall prosperity and high per capita income. During the Cold War, Finland officially embraced a policy of neutrality. It became a member of the EU in 1995, the Eurozone in 1999, and NATO in 2023. Finland is a member of various international organisations, such as the UN, the Nordic Council, the Schengen Area, the CoE, the WTO and OECD.

Finland's national performance metrics, including education, economic competitiveness, civil liberties, quality of life, and human development are outstanding. The population is 92 % Finn by ethnicity. 67% Christians are Lutheran and 1 % Orthodox. Finland is a unitary parliamentary republic. Its population density is a mere 16 per square kilometre and GDP nominal 305 billion dollars with per capita value of 55,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.942, very high and time zone is UTC+ 2.

The capital is also its largest city. Its climate varies from humid continental in the south to boreal in the north. The land cover is predominantly boreal forest biome, with more than 180,000 recorded lakes.

FRANCE

French Republic (Demonym French) with Capital Paris has a Population of 68.4 million in an Area of 640,679. Its Language is French and Religion: Christian 63%, Muslim 8%. Its Currency is Euro.

France is a country located primarily in Western Europe. It also includes overseas regions and territories in the Americas and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans, giving it one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world. The metropolitan France shares borders with Belgium and Luxembourg to the north; Germany to the east; Italy and Monaco to the southeast; Andorra and Spain to the south, and a maritime border with the UK to the northwest. Its metropolitan area extends from the Rhine to the Atlantic Ocean and from the Mediterranean Sea to the English Channel and the North Sea.

France has eighteen integral regions, five of which are located overseas. These are discussed in detail under Territories section of this book. They mainly include French Guiana in South America, Saint Pierre and Miquelon in the North Atlantic, the French West Indies, and many islands in Oceania and the Indian Ocean. Metropolitan France area is 551,500 and overseas regions area 89,179 square kilometres.

Metropolitan France was settled by Celtic tribes known as Gauls during the Iron Age before Rome annexed the area in 51 BC, leading to a distinct Gallo-Roman culture. In the early middle Ages, the Germanic Franks formed the Kingdom of Francia, which became the heartland of the Carolingian Empire. The treaty of Verdun of 843 partitioned the empire, with West Francia evolving into the Kingdom of France. In the High Middle Ages, France was a powerful and decentralised feudal kingdom, but from the mid-14th to the mid-15th century, it was plunged into a dynastic conflict with England known as the Hundred Years War. In the 16th century, the French Renaissance saw cultural flourish and a French colonial empire rise. Internally, France was dominated by the conflict with the House of Habsburg and the French Wars of Religion between Catholics and Huguenots. France was successful in Thirty Years War and further increased its influence during the reign of Louis 14.

The French revolution of 1789 overthrew the Ancient Regime and produced the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which expresses the nation's ideals to this day. France reached its political and military zenith in the early 19th century under Napoleon Bonaparte, subjugating part of continental Europe and establishing the First French Empire. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars significantly shaped the course of the European history. The collapse of the empire initiated a period of relative decline, in which France endured a tumultuous succession of governments until the founding of the French Third Republic during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Subsequent decades saw a period of economic prosperity and cultural and scientific flourishing known as the Belle Époque. France was one of the major participants of World War 1, from which it emerged victorious at great human and economic cost. It was among the Allied powers of World War 2, but it surrendered and was occupied by the Axis in 1940. Following its liberation in 1944,

the short-lived Fourth Republic was established and later dissolved in the course of the defeat in the Algerian War. The current Fifth Republic was formed in 1958 by Charles de Gaulle. Algeria and most French colonies became independent in the 1960s, with the majority retaining close economic and military ties with France.

France is a unitary semi-presidential republic. Its capital Paris is the country's largest city and main cultural and commercial centre. Its other major urban areas include Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Lille, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Nantes and Nice.

France retains its centuries-long status as a global centre of art, science, and philosophy. It hosts the third largest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and is the world's leading tourist destination, receiving over 89 million foreign visitors in 2018. France is a developed country with a high nominal per capita income globally and its advanced economy ranks among the largest in the world. France produces and exports the world best automobiles, aircraft, missiles and naval vessels. 92 % of its population is French and its population density is 122. Its GDP nominal is 3 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 46,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.910, very high and time is UTC+ 1.

France is a great power in global affairs, being one of the five permanent members of the UNSC and an official nuclear weapon state. France is a founding and leading member of the EU and the Eurozone, as well as a key member of the Group of Seven, NATO, OECD and Francophonie.

GABON

Gabonese Republic (Demonym: Gabonese) with Capital Libreville has a Population: of 2 million in an Area: 267,667. Its Languages are French, Fang and Religion: Christian 82%, Muslim 12%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Gabon is on west coast of Central Africa, lying on the equator. It borders Equatorial Guinea to the northwest; Cameroon to the north; Republic of Congo to the east and south; and Gulf of Guinea to the west. Gabon is situated east of the point where the Equator and the Prime Meridian intersect. Its port facilities make it important for its landlocked neighbours.

Gabon's original inhabitants were the pygmy peoples. Beginning in the 14th century, Bantu migrants began settling in the area as well. Since its independence from France in 1960, Gabon has had three presidents. Gabon is a developing country. It is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of per capita income. However, large portions of society are very poor. Omar Bongo came to office in 1967 and created a dynasty, which stabilised its power through a clientist network,

Francafrique. Fang, Punu and Nzebi are its main ethnic groups. Its population density is 8. Its GDP nominal is 42 billion dollars with a per capita value of 9000 dollars. Its time is UTC +1.

THE GAMBIA

Republic of the Gambia (Demonym: Gambian) with Capital: Banjul has a Population: 2.5 million in an Area: 11,300. Its Languages are English, Mandinka and Religion: Muslim 96%, Christian 4%. Its Currency is Dalasi.

The Gambia is a country in West Africa. It is almost entirely surrounded by Senegal with the exception of its western coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. It is situated on both sides of the lower reaches of the Gambia River, which flows through the centre of the country and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The river demarcates the elongated shape of the country. The capital is the largest city. Serekunda and Brikama are the other major cities.

Arab Muslim merchants traded with native West Africans in Gambia throughout the 9th and 10th centuries. In 1455, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to enter Gambia, although they never established significant trade. The region was made a part of the British Empire by establishment of a colony in 1765. Exactly 200 years later, in 1965, the country gained independence under the leadership of Dawda Jawara. He ruled until Yahya Jammeh seized power in a bloodless 1994 coup and ruled until 2017. Adama Barrow became the third president in 2017 after defeating Jammeh in elections. Jammeh refused to leave office until a military intervention by ECOWAS removed him.

The Gambia is the smallest country in the continental Africa. Alex Hailey in his book Roots, established that his Muslim ancestors had been kidnapped from the Gambia. From Banjul to North East Brazil is relatively a short route between Africa and the mainland South America. 34 % of its population is Mandinka and 25 % Fula. Its population density is 176 and GDP nominal 2.3 billion dollars with a per capita value of 900 dollars. Its economy is dominated by farming, fishing and tourism. Almost half of its population lives in poverty and in rural areas. Its HDI is low and time is UTC.

The Gambia has been a member of ECOWAS since its conception in 1975. It is also a member of the Commonwealth.

GEORGIA

Republic of Georgia (Demonym: Georgian) with Capital: Tbilisi has Population: 4 million in an area of 69,700. Its languages are Georgian and Russian and Religion: Christian 87% and Muslim 11%. Its Currency is Lari.

Georgia is in Caucasus region of Eurasia at crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. It is bounded by Black Sea to the west, Russia to the north, Turkey and Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the southeast. A third of its population lives in the capital and largest city.

Georgia has been inhabited since prehistoric times, hosting the world's earliest known sites of wine making, gold mining, and textiles. The classical era saw the emergence of several kingdoms, such as Cochis and Iberia that formed the nucleus of the modern Georgian state. In the early fourth century, Georgians officially adopted Christianity, which contributed to their gradual unification and ethno-genesis. In the High Middle Ages, the Kingdom of Georgia reached its golden age during the reign of King David 4 and Queen Tamar. The Kingdom subsequently declined and disintegrated under the hegemony of various regional powers, including the Mongols, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. Starting in 1801, it was gradually annexed into the Russian Empire.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Georgia briefly emerged as an independent republic under German protectorate, but was invaded and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1922 as one of its constituent republics. In the 1980s, an independence movement grew quickly, leading to Georgia's secession from the Soviet Union in 1991. For much of the subsequent decade, the country endured economic crisis, political instability, and secessionist wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Following the peaceful Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia strongly pursued a pro-Western foreign policy, introducing a series of democratic and economic reforms aimed at integration into the EU and NATO. The country's western orientation soon led to worsening relations with Russia, which culminated in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 and continued Russian occupation of parts of Georgia.

Georgia is a representative democracy governed as a unitary parliamentary republic. It is a developing country with a very high HDI. Economic reforms since independence have led to higher levels of economic freedom, as well as reductions in corruption indicators, poverty, and unemployment. Georgia is only the second country in the world to legalise cannabis, and the only former socialist state to do so. 87 % of its people are Georgian, 7% Azerbaijani and 5% Armenian. 83% Christians are Georgian Orthodox. Its population density is 58 and GDP nominal 30 billion with a per capita value of 8,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high and time UTC + 4.

The country is a member of international organisations, including the Council of Europe, Eurocontrol, BSEC, GUAM, and Energy Community. As part of the Association Trio, Georgia is a candidate for EU membership.

GERMANY

Federal Republic of Germany (Demonym: German) with Capital: Berlin has a Population of 84 million in an Area of 357,600. Its Language is German and Religion: Christian 69% and Muslim 6%. Its Currency is Euro.

Germany is a country in the western region of Central Europe. It lies between the Baltic and North Sea to the north and the Alps Mountains, Lake Constance and the High Rhine to the south. It borders Denmark to the north; Poland and the Czech Republic to the east; Austria and Switzerland to the south; France to the southwest; and Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands to the west.

Germany has 16 constituent states. Its capital, Berlin lies at the position 53N13E and is the most populous city in the country. Its main financial centre is Frankfurt and the largest urban area, Ruhr. It is a Federal Parliamentary Republic and is the second most populous country in Europe after Russia and the most populous country in the European Union. Its population density is 236 per square kilometre. It has the third greatest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Settlement in what is now Germany began in the Lower Palaeolithic, with various tribes inhabiting it from the Neolithic onwards, chiefly the Celts. Various Germanic tribes have inhabited the northern parts of modern Germany since classical antiquity. A region named Germania was documented before AD 100. In 962, the Kingdom of Germany formed the bulk of the Holy Roman Empire. During the 16th century, the northern German regions became centre of the Protestant Reformation. Following the Napoleonic Wars and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the German Confederation was formed in 1815.

Formal unification of Germany into the modern nation state commenced in 1866 with the North German Confederation Treaty establishing the Prussia-led North German Confederation later transformed in 1871 into the German Empire. After WW1 and the German Revolution of 1919, the Empire was in turn transformed into the semi-presidential Weimar Republic. The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 led to the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship and World War 2. After the end of the war and a period of Allied occupation in 1949, Germany as a whole was organised into two separate polities with limited sovereignty; the Federal Republic of Germany, generally known as West Germany, and the German Democratic Republic, known as East Germany, while Berlin continued its de jure Four Power status. The Federal Republic of Germany was a founding member of the European Economic Community and the European Union, while the German Democratic Republic was a

communist Eastern Bloc state and a member of the Warsaw Pact. After the fall of the communist government in East Germany, German unification took place in 1990.

Germany has been described as a great power. Its strong social market economy is the largest in Europe. It has a highly skilled labour force, a low level of corruption, and a high level of innovation. Its GDP PPP total is 5.5 trillion dollars, the 5th highest in the world with a per capita value of 66,000 dollars, 18th, highest. Its GDP nominal total is 4.5 trillion dollars, 3rd highest, and per capita is 53,000 dollars, 19th highest. It is the third largest exporter and third largest importer in the world. The service sector contributes 69 % to the GDP, industry 30 % and agriculture 1 %. Unemployment in Germany is 3 %.

The top ten exports of Germany include vehicles, machinery, chemical goods, electronic products, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, transport equipment, basic metals, food products, rubber and plastics. The German car industry is among the most competitive in the world. Volkswagen group is the second largest manufacturer in the world by both production and sales. It is also the third largest exporter of cars. As a developed country, it offers social security, a universal health care system, and a tuition free university education. Germany is a member of the UN, EU, NATO, Council of Europe, G7, G20, and OECD.

GHANA

Republic of Ghana (Demonym: Ghanaian) with Capital: Accra has Population of 30 million in an Area of 239,000. Its Languages are English and Akan and Religion: Christian 70% and Muslim 20%. Its Currency is Cedi.

Ghana is situated in West Africa. It borders Ivory Coast to the west; Burkina Faso to the north; Togo to the east and Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Ghana means warrior king in the Soninke language. The first permanent state in the present territory of Ghana dates back to the 11th century. Numerous kingdoms and empires emerged over centuries. Beginning in the 15th century, the Portuguese Empire, followed by other European powers contested the area for trading rights, until the British established control by the late 19th century. The current borders were established by the 1900s as the British Gold Coast. Ghana became independent of the UK in March, 1957. Ghana spans a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. 46 % of its people are Akan by ethnicity. 50 % Christians are Protestant. Its population density is 100 and GDP nominal per capita 2300 dollars. Its HDI is high and time UTC.

It is a unitary constitutional democracy, led by a president who is the head of state as well as government. Growing economic prosperity and democracy have made it a regional power in the Western Africa. It is a member of NAM, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), G24, and the Commonwealth of Nations.

GREECE

Hellenic Republic (Demonym: Greek) with Capital: Athens has Population of 11 million in an Area of 131,950. Its Languages are Greek and English and Religion: Christian 88% and Muslim 5%. Its Currency is Euro.

Greece is situated in South Eastern Europe. It lies on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula. It borders Albania to the northwest; North Macedonia and Bulgaria to the north; and Turkey to the east. It has Aegean Sea to the east; Ionian Sea to the west; and Cretan and Mediterranean Seas, to the south.

Greece is considered the cradle of the Western civilisation. It is the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, Western literature, historiography, political science, major scientific and mathematical principles, theatre, and Olympic Games. It was ruled by Turkey for a few centuries. At 13,676 kilometres, it has the longest coastline on the Mediterranean and the 11th longest in the world. It has many islands, 227 of these inhabited. 80% Greece is mountainous. At 9573 feet, Mount Olympus is the highest point in Greece.

From the 8th century BC, the Greeks were organised into various independent city states, known as poleis, which spanned the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. Philip 2 of Macedon united most of present day Greece in the fourth century BC, with his son Alexander the Great rapidly conquering much of the known ancient world, from the eastern Mediterranean to north-western India. The subsequent Hellenistic period saw the height of Greek culture and influence in antiquity.

Greece was annexed by Rome in the second century BC, becoming an integral part of the Roman Empire and, its continuation, the Byzantine Empire, which was predominantly Greek in culture and language. The Greek Orthodox Church, which emerged in the first century AD, helped shape modern Greek identity, and transmitted Greek traditions to the wider Orthodox world. After the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Latin possessions were established in parts of the Greek peninsula, but most of the area fell under Ottoman rule in the mid-15th century. Greece emerged as a modern nation state in 1830, following a war of independence.

Over the first hundred years, the Kingdom of Greece sought territorial expansion, which was mainly achieved in the early 20th century, during the Balkan Wars and up

until its Asia Minor Campaign ended with a catastrophic defeat in 1922. The short lived republic that followed was beset by the ramifications of civil strife and the challenge of resettling refugees from Turkey. In 1936, a royalist dictatorship inaugurated a long period of authoritarian rule, marked by military occupation during World War 2, civil war, and military dictatorship. Greece achieved record economic growth from 1950 through the 1970s, allowing it to join the ranks of developed countries. Democracy was restored in 1975, and Greece has since been a parliamentary republic.

Greece is a democratic and developed country with an advanced high income economy, the second largest in the Balkans, where it is an important regional investor. Greece has a unique cultural heritage reflected in its 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It has a large tourism industry and prominent shipping sector.

A founding member of the United Nations, Greece was the tenth member to join the European Communities, the precursor to the European Union, and has been part of the Eurozone since 2001. It is also a member of numerous other international institutions, including the Council of Europe, NATO, the OECD, the WTO, and the OSCE. Greece is also a founding member of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

Its per capita nominal GDP is 18,000 dollars and its economy is classed as advanced and high income. The service sector is 85 %, industry 12 % and agriculture 3 % of the economy. Tourism is the lead industry. 15 million tourists visit Greece per annum. With its world largest merchant marine, its shipping is 17 % of the total global capacity Greece is the largest agricultural producer of cotton and pistachios, second largest producer of rice and olives, third largest producer of figs, almonds, tomatoes and watermelons, and fourth largest producer of tobacco in the EU. Greece is also a considerable producer in fishing within the EU.

GRENADE

Grenada (Demonym: Grenadian) with Capital Saint George's has Population of 110,000 in an Area of 350. Its Languages are English and French, and Religion: Christian 97%. Its Currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

Grenada is an island nation in the Eastern Caribbean. It forms southern end of the Grenadine island chain. Grenada Island is in the south. There are 6 smaller islands to its north which too form part of the nation. Grenada has Trinidad and Tobago to the southeast, Venezuela to the southwest and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the northeast.

Grenada is called the *island of spice* due to its production of nutmeg and mace crops. Its indigenous people were Arawak and Island Caribs. French settlement started in 1650 and continued for a century. Subsequently, it mainly remained under British rule from 1763 to 1974 except for a brief French rule of 4 years. It became independent in 1974. The first government was overthrown by communists in 1979. They were removed in 1983 through a US led invasion. Grenada is thickly populated.

Grenada has a small economy and is under heavy debt. It is listed as the 9th from bottom in a study covering 128 countries. Tourism is the major foreign exchange earner. Its beaches, waterfalls and festivals attract tourists. It exports spices most notably nutmeg as the top export that is depicted on the national flag. Mace is also exported. Other major exports include fruits, mostly bananas, vegetables, cocoa, clothing, chocolate and fish.

GUATEMALA

Republic of Guatemala (Demonym: Guatemalan) with Capital: Guatemala City has Population: 17.6 million, Area: 108,900, Languages: Spanish, local dialects, Religion: Christian 88% and Currency: Quetzal.

Guatemala is situated in Central America. It is bordered to the north and west by Mexico; to the northeast by Belize, to the east by Honduras, and to the southeast by El Salvador. It is touched to the south by the Pacific Ocean and to the northeast by the Gulf of Honduras.

Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America, the 4th most populous in North America and the 11th most populous in the Americas. The capital Guatemala City is the most populous city in Central America. The territory of modern Guatemala once formed core of the Maya civilisation, which extended across Mesoamerica. Most of Guatemala was conquered by the Spanish in the 16th century and made part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. It declared independence from the Spanish Empire in 1821, the First Mexican Empire in 1823, and the Federal Republic of Central America in 1839. Guatemala is known for its rainforests and volcanoes.

It is a representative democracy. 56 % of its population is Ladino or Mestizo and 42 % Maya. 45 % Christians are Roman Catholics while 42 % Protestant.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 5,500 dollars and it has the largest economy in Central America. However it faces many social problems and is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. The income distribution is highly unequal and 54 % population lives

below poverty line. Remittances from Guatemalans living in United States now constitute the largest single source of foreign income. Its main exports include organic coffee, fruits, fresh vegetables, flowers, handicrafts and textiles.

In the face of the rising demand for biofuels, the country is growing and exporting an increasing amount of raw materials for biofuel production, especially sugar cane and palm oil. Critics say that this development leads to higher prices for staple foods like corn, a major ingredient in the Guatemalan diet. The US corn being cheaper is imported to meet half of the required quantity.

The service sector is the largest component of the GDP at 63 %, followed by industry sector at 24 % and agriculture at 13 %. Mines produce gold, silver, zinc, cobalt and nickel. The agriculture sector accounts for two fifth of exports and half of the labour force. The 1996 peace accords that ended the decade's long civil war removed a major obstacle to foreign investment. Tourism has become an increasing source of revenue for Guatemala, thanks to the new foreign investment. An increase in the number of cruise ships visiting Guatemalan seaports has increased the number of tourists to 2 million per year bringing in almost 2 billion dollars. Tourist destinations include Maya archaeological sites like Tikal in the Petén, Quirigua in Izabel, Iximche in Chimaltenango and Guatemala City. There are also natural attractions like Atitlan and Semuc Champey. The historical colonial city of Antigua Guatemala is recognised as a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site.

Guatemala ratified the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement between several Central American countries and the USA. Guatemala also has free trade agreements with Taiwan and Colombia.

GUINEA

Republic of Guinea (Demony: Guinean) with Capital: Conakry has Population: 13.5 million, Area: 245,857, Languages: French, Susa, Religion: Muslim 90%, Christian 11% and Currency: Franc.

Guinea is situated in Western Africa. It borders the Atlantic Ocean to the west; Guinea Bissau to the northwest; Senegal to the north; Mali to the northeast; Ivory Coast to the southeast; and Sierra Leone and Liberia to the south. It was formerly known as French Guinea. At present, it is sometimes referred to as Guinea Conakry after its capital Conakry, to distinguish it from other territories in the eponymous region such as Guinea Bissau and Equatorial Guinea. It is divided into four geographical regions; Maritime Guinea on the Atlantic Coast, the Fouta Djallon or Middle Guinea highlands, the Upper Guinea Savannah region in the northeast, and

the Guinea forest region in the tropics. Its strategic location and natural deposits render Guinea important.

Guinea is a unitary republic. The president is the head of state and government. It has a unicameral national assembly. Its ethnic groups include 33 % Fula, 30 % Mandinka and 21 % Susu. Guinea won independence from France in 1958. Its population density is 106 per square kilometre and GDP per capita nominal 1600 dollars. The economy is dependent on agriculture and mineral production. Guinea has at least 25 % of the world's known bauxite reserves and is its second largest producer. Bauxite and alumina are the major exports. It also has deposits of diamonds, gold, high grade iron and uranium. In the field of agriculture, rice is imported while apples and pears are increasing in production and now it has the trend to grow more grapes, pomegranates and strawberry.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Republic of Guinea Bissau (Demony: Bissau Guinean) with Capital: Bissau has Population: 2 million, Area: 36,120, Languages: Portuguese, Creole, Religion: Muslim 46%, Christian 19% and Currency: West African CFA Franc.

Guinea Bissau is situated in Northern Africa. It is bordered by Senegal to the north; Guinea to the south and east, and Atlantic Ocean to the west.

Guinea Bissau was once part of the Kingdom of Kaabu, as well as part of the Mali Empire. Parts of the Kingdom persisted till the 18th century, while a few others had remained under Portugal since the 16th century. In the 19th century, it was colonised as Portuguese Guinea. It gained independence from Portugal in 1973.

Its GDP per capita nominal is 1000 dollars. This figure is one of the lowest in the world. More than two thirds of the population lives below the poverty line. The economy depends mainly on agriculture. Fish, cashew nuts and ground nuts are its major exports.

Guinea Bissau is a member of the UN, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Community of Portuguese Language Countries, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, and the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone.

GUYANA

Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Demonym: Guyanese) with Capital: Georgetown has Population: 800,000 in an Area: 214,970. Its languages are English and Hindi and Religion: Christian 54%, 31 Hindu. Its currency is Guyanese Dollar.

Guyana is an indigenous word which means Land of many Waters. It is situated on northern mainland of South America. It borders Atlantic Ocean to the north; Brazil to the south and southwest, Venezuela to the west and Suriname to the east. The capital Georgetown is a mere 6 degrees north of the Equator and 60 degrees west of the Greenwich Meridian.

Guyana is the third smallest state by area in mainland South America after Uruguay and Suriname, and the second least populated sovereign state in South America after Suriname. Rivers originating in Guyana become part of Amazon, the second longest river system of the world. It has a wide variety of natural habitats and very high biodiversity.

Its population density of 9 is among the lowest in the world. Muslims constitute 8 % of the population. Despite its small Muslim population, Guyana is a member of the OIC and it has a Muslim president at the moment namely Irfaan Ali. Guyana is the only South American nation in which English is the official language. 10 indigenous languages are also spoken by different ethnic groups. 40 % of its population is Indian 30 % African and 20 % multiracial.

Guyana remained under Dutch control from 1667 to 1815. It became British Guiana in 1831 and gained independence from the UK as Guyana in 1966. Its GDP nominal per capita is 21000 dollars. Its main economic activities are agriculture focused on rice and Demerara sugar; bauxite and gold mining; timber; seafood; minerals, crude oil and natural gas. Its major crude oil reserves were discovered off the Atlantic coast and drilling began in 2019. The 11 billion barrels of crude oil have put Guyana on course to become one of the largest producers of oil per capita. This figure represents the largest addition to global oil reserves since the 1970s.

HAITI

Republic of Haiti (Demonym: Haitian) with Capital: Port-au-Prince has a Population: 11.4 million in an Area: 27,750. Its Languages are French and Creole and Religion: Christian 87%. Its Currency is Gourde.

Haiti is a country on the island of Hispaniola in the Greater Antilles archipelago of the Caribbean Sea, east of Cuba and Jamaica, and south of the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It occupies the western three eighths of the island of Hispaniola

which it shares with the Dominican Republic. To its south west lies the small Navassa Island. This is claimed by Haiti but is disputed as a US territory under federal administration. The capital is located at 18N72W.

Haiti is the third largest and the most populous country in the Caribbean. 95 % of its population is black and 5 % mixed or white. Its population density is 382 per square kilometre. The island was originally inhabited by the indigenous Taino people, who originated in South America. The first Europeans arrived in 1492 during the first voyage of Christopher Columbus. Columbus subsequently founded the first European settlement in the Americas, La Navidad, on what is now the northeaster coast of Haiti. The island was claimed by Spain and named La Espanola, forming part of the Spanish Empire until the early 17th century. However, competing claims and settlements by the French led to the western portion of the island being ceded to France in 1697, which was subsequently named Saint Domingue. French colonists established lucrative sugarcane plantations, worked by vast numbers of slaves brought from Africa, which made the colony one of the richest in the world.

In the midst of the French Revolution in 1789 to 1799, slaves, maroons, and free people of colour launched the Haitian Revolution in 1791 to 1804, led by a former slave and the second black general of the French Army namely Toussaint Louverture, the first being Thomas Alexandre Dumas.

After 12 years of conflict, the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte were defeated by the successor of Louverture namely Jean Jacques Dessalines. He later became the Emperor Jacques 1 and declared the sovereignty of Haiti on 1st January 1804, leading to the massacre of the French. Its independence from France was recognised in 1825. The country thus became the first independent nation of Latin America and the Caribbean, the second Republic in the Americas, the first country in the Americas to eliminate slavery, and the only state in history established by a successful slave revolt.

Apart from Alexander Petion, the first President of the Republic, all of its first leaders were former slaves. After a brief period in which the country was split in two, President Jean Pierre Boyer united the country and then attempted to expand Haitian influence over the eastern part of Hispaniola, which eventually led to the Haitian Dominical Wars. Haiti recognised Dominican independence in 1867, following their declaration in 1844.

Haiti's first century of independence was characterised by political instability, ostracism by the international community, and the payment of a crippling debt to France. Political volatility and foreign economic influence in the country prompted the United States to occupy the country from 1915 to 1934. Following a series of short lived presidencies, Francois Papa Doc Duvalier took power in 1957, ushering in a long period of autocratic rule continued by his son, Jean Claude Baby Doc Duvalier that lasted until 1986. The period was characterised by state sanctioned violence

against the opposition and civilians, corruption, and economic stagnation. After 1986, Haiti began attempting to establish a more democratic political system. Now its government is a unitary semi presidential republic.

Historically poor and politically unstable, Haiti has the lowest HDI in the Americas, as well as widespread slavery. Since the turn of the 21st century, the country has endured a coup d'état, which prompted UN intervention, as well as a catastrophic earthquake that killed 250,000 and a cholera outbreak. With its deteriorating economic situation, as well as recent calls by IMF to cut fuel subsidies, Haiti has been experiencing a socioeconomic and political crisis marked by riots and protests, widespread hunger, and increased gang activity. Haiti is considered a failed state.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 2000 dollars. The economy is highly regulated, predominantly state owned ranking 145th among 177 countries by a freedom index of the Heritage Foundation. Despite its tourism industry, Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Americas and the poorest in the Caribbean. The main causes are corruption; political instability; poor infrastructure, lack of health care and lack of education. Unemployment is high and many Haitians seek to emigrate. Its trade declined dramatically after 2010 earthquake and subsequent outbreak of cholera.

Being the only French Speaking country in the region, Samuel Philip Huntington considers Haiti a **lone** country. It is a founding member of the UN, Organisation of American States, and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. In addition to the CARICOM, it is a member of the IMF and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

HONDURAS

Republic of Honduras (Demonym: Honduran) with Capital: Tegucigalpa has a Population of 10 million in an Area of 112,090. Its Languages are: Spanish and Local dialects and Religion: Christian 75%. Its Currency is Lempira.

The present Honduras is also called Spanish Honduras to differentiate it from British Honduras. The latter became the modern day state of Belize. Honduras is a republic in Central America. It is bordered by Guatemala to the west; El Salvador to the southwest and Nicaragua to the southeast. It is also bordered by Pacific Ocean to the south at the Gulf of Fonseca and by the Gulf of Honduras, a large inlet of the Caribbean Sea to the north. It is almost equidistant from Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, Jamaica and Panama Canal.

Honduras was home to several important Mesoamerican cultures notably the Maya, before the Spanish colonisation in the 16th century. The Spanish introduced

Catholicism and the new predominantly Spanish language, along with numerous customs that have blended with the indigenous culture. Honduras declared independence from Spain in 1821 and from the First Mexican Empire in 1823. Its name was changed to Honduras, from the Federal Republic of Central America in 1838. In 1960, the northern part of what was the Mosquito Coast was transferred from Nicaragua to Honduras by the International Court of Justice.

Its ethnic groups include 90 % Mestizo that is mixed indigenous and white, 7 % indigenous and 2 % black. 38 % each among Christians adhere to Catholic and Protestant faith. The government is unitary presidential republic

Since independence Honduras has witnessed strife and instability and it has the highest murder rate in the world. In the Western Hemisphere only Haiti, Nicaragua and Guyana are poorer than Honduras. This is despite the fact that Honduras is rich in resources including minerals, coffee, tropical fruit and sugarcane. It also has a significant textile industry. . Its GDP nominal per capita is 3300 dollars. Agriculture accounts for 14 % of the GDP. Coffee exports are 22 % of the total. Bananas was formerly the second largest export but was wiped out virtually by 1998 Hurricane Mitch. Cultivated shrimp is another important export of the country. There are extensive forests but widespread slash and burn continue to destroy them. Marine and mineral resources too abound in the country. Remittances from Hondurans living mostly in the US are on the rise.

HUNGARY

Magyarorszag (Demonym: Hungarian) with Capital: Budapest has a Population: 10 million in an Area: 93,090. Its Language is Hungarian (Magyar). Its religion is Christian 43% and Currency: Forint.

Hungary is a landlocked country in Central Europe. Spanning the Carpathian Basin, It is bordered by Slovakia to the north; Ukraine to the northeast, Romania to the east and southeast; Serbia to the south; Croatia and Slovenia to the southwest and Austria to the west. The capital Budapest is also the largest city in Hungary. Basically, Buda and Pest were two cities separated by Danube River. Later they became one. Hungary is sandwiched between its Catholic and Orthodox neighbours. Serbia and Romania are Orthodox while Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and Slovakia are Catholic. Ukraine is a mixture of the two faiths.

Prior to the foundation of the Hungarian state, various peoples settled in the territory of present day Hungary; most notably the Celts, Romans, Huns, Germanic peoples, Avars, and Slavs. The Principality of Hungary was established in the late 9th century

by Almos and his son Arpad through the conquest of the Carpathian Basin. King Stephen 1 ascended the throne in 1000, converting his realm to Christian Kingdom. The medieval Kingdom of Hungary was a European power, reaching its height in the 14th and 15th centuries. After a long period of Ottoman wars, Hungary's forces were defeated at the Battle of Mohacs and its capital was captured in 1541, opening roughly 150 years long period when the country divided into three parts; Royal Hungary loyal to the Habsburg, Ottoman Hungary and the largely independent Principality of Transylvania. The reunited Hungary came under Habsburg rule at the turn of the 18th century, fighting wars of independence in 1703-1711, and 1848-49 until a compromise allowed the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867, a major power into the early 20th century. Austria –Hungary collapsed after the WW1, and the subsequent Treaty of Trianon in 1920 established Hungary's current borders, resulting in the loss of 70 % of its historical territory, 58% of its population, and 32 % of its ethnic Hungarians. In the interwar period, after initial turmoil, Miklos Horthy ascended as a determining politician, representing the monarchy as regent in place of the Habsburgs. Hungary joined the Axis powers in WW2, suffering significant damage and casualties. As a result, the Hungarian Peoples Republic was established as a satellite state of the Soviet Union. Following the failed 1956 revolution, Hungary became a comparatively freer, though still repressed member of the Eastern Bloc. In 1989, concurrently with the Revolutions of 1989, Hungary peacefully transitioned into a democratic parliamentary republic, joining the EU in 2004 and the Schengen Area in 2007. Hungary has a long history of significant contributions to arts, music, literature, sports, science, and technology. Now its population is 88% Hungarian and 30% of its Christians are Catholic. Its population density is 105

Hungary is a high income economy with universal healthcare and tuition free secondary education. It is a popular tourist destination in Europe, drawing 25 million tourists per annum. Its GDP nominal is 203 billion dollars with a per capita value of 21,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.851, very high and time is UTC+1.

It is a member of numerous international organisations, including the CoE, NATO, UN, WHO, WTO, World Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Visegrad Group.

ICELAND

Republic of Iceland (Demony: Icelander) with Capital Reykjavik has Population: 400,000 in an Area: 103,000. Its Languages are Icelandic and English and Religion: Christian 73%. Its Currency is Kroner.

Iceland is a Nordic island nation between the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, on the mid-Atlantic Ridge between North America and Europe. It is situated between Greenland and the UK. Its latitude range is 63N to 68N and Longitude 13W and 25W. Denmark Strait separates Iceland from Greenland which, in a way, is included in the American continent. Iceland provides a vital diversionary place for North Atlantic flights. It is included in Europe due to geographical, historical, political, cultural, linguistic and practical reasons. It is entirely south of the Arctic Circle at 67N except one of its islands. Its capital is its largest city.

Located on a rift between tectonic plates, Iceland's geologic activity includes geysers and frequent volcanic eruptions. The interior consists of a volcanic plateau characterised by sand and lava fields, mountains and glaciers. Many glacial rivers flow to the sea through the lowlands. Settlement of Iceland began in 874 by Norwegians and other Scandinavians bringing with them slaves of Gaelic origin. After centuries of strife, Iceland was ceded to Denmark in 1814. It became an independent republic in 1944.

Iceland relied largely on substantive fishing and agriculture till the 20th century. Industrialisation of the fisheries and Marshall Plan aid brought prosperity, and Iceland became one of the most developed countries in the world. It joined the EU in 1994. It maintains a Nordic healthcare system and provides tertiary education for its citizens. It has the smallest population of any NATO member and has no standing army. 86 % of its population is Icelandic and 70 % Christians follow the Church of Iceland. Its population density is 3.7, among the lowest in the world. Its GDP nominal is 30 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 80,000, and its time is UTC.

INDIA

Republic of India (Demonym: Indian) with Capital: New Delhi has Population: 1.43 **billion** in Area: 3,287,263. Its Languages are Hind and, English and Religion: Hindu 80%, Muslim 14%. Its Currency is Rupee.

India is a country in South Asia. It is the 7th largest country by area and the most populous country and democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the south; Arabian Sea to the southwest, the Bay of Bengal to the southeast and Himalayas to the north. It is bordered by Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal and Bhutan to the north; and, Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. In the Indian Ocean, it also has Sri Lanka and Maldives in vicinity. Its Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Myanmar and Thailand.

In Meghalaya state of India, a clan has a strange practice. Under its provisions, the youngest daughter exercises command over the entire family. She is the sole inheritor in the family. Should she lose her father, her husband is required to take the widowed mother-in-law as his second wife.

Modern humans arrived on the Indian subcontinent from Africa no later than 55,000 years ago. Their long occupation, initially in varying forms of isolation as hunter-gatherers, has made the region second most diverse in human genetics after Africa. Settled life emerged on the subcontinent in the western margins of the Indus river basin 9,000 years ago, evolving gradually into the Indus Valley Civilisation of the Third millennium BC. By 1200 BC, an archaic form of Sanskrit, an Indo-European language, had diffused into India from the northwest. Its evidence today is found in the hymns of the Rig-Veda. Preserved by an oral-tradition that was resolutely vigilant, the Rig-Veda records the dawning of Hinduism in India. The Dravidian languages of India were supplanted in the northern and western regions. By 400 BC, stratification and exclusion by caste had emerged within Hinduism; and Buddhism and Jainism had arisen, proclaiming social orders unlinked to heredity. Early political consolidations gave rise to the loose-knit Maurya and Gupta Empires based in the Ganges Basin. Their collective era was suffused with wide-ranging creativity, but also marked by the declining status of women, and the incorporation of untouchability into an organised system of belief. In South India, the Middle kingdoms exported Dravidian-languages scripts and religious cultures to the Kingdoms of Southeast Asia.

In the early medieval era, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism became established on India's southern and western coasts. Muslim armies from Central Asia intermittently overran India's northern plains, eventually founding the Delhi Sultanate, and drawing northern India into the cosmopolitan networks of medieval Islam. In the 15th century, the Vijayanagara Empire created a long-lasting composite Hindu culture in south India. In the Punjab, Sikhism emerged as an institutionalised religion. The Mughal Empire, in 1526, ushered in two centuries of relative peace, leaving a legacy of luminous architecture. Gradually, expanding rule of the British East India Company followed, turning India into a colonial economy, but also consolidating its sovereignty. British Crown rule began in 1858. The rights promised to Indians were granted slowly, but technological changes were introduced, and modern ideas of education and the public life took root. A pioneering and influential nationalist movement emerged, which was noted for nonviolent resistance and became the major factor in ending British rule. In 1947 the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two independent dominions, a Hindu majority India and a Muslim majority Pakistan amid large scale loss of life and an unprecedented migration.

India has been a Federal Republic since 1950, governed through a democratic parliamentary system. It is a pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society. India's population grew from 361 million in 1951 to almost 1.4 billion in 2022. During the same time, its nominal per capita income increased from 64 billion dollars to 2600

dollars, and its literacy rate from 17 % to 74 %. From being a comparatively destitute country in 1951, India has become a fast growing major economy and a hub of information technology services, with an expanding middle class. India has a space programme with several planned or completed extra-terrestrial missions. Indian movies, music, and spiritual teachings play an increasing role in global culture. India has reduced its rate of poverty, though at the cost of increasing economic inequality.

India is a nuclear power and ranks high in military expenditure. Gender inequality, child malnutrition and air pollution are its major problems. India's land is mega diverse with four biodiversity hotspots. Its forest cover comprises 22 % of its area.

80 % of its population is Hindu, 14 % Muslim, 2 % Christen and 2 % Sikh. Its population density is 425 and GDP nominal 4 trillion dollars with a per capita income of 3000 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 5.30.

INDONESIA

Republic of Indonesia (Demonym: Indonesian) with Capital: Jakarta has Population: 280 million in Area: 1904569. Its Languages are Bahasa Indonesian and English and Religion: Muslim 87%, Christian 11%. Its Currency is Rupiah.

Indonesia lies in South East Asia and Oceania between Indian Ocean to the west and south; and Pacific Ocean to the east and north. It is bordered by Malaysia and Brunei to the north, Papua New Guinea to the east and East Timor to the south. Its other neighbours include Vietnam and Philippines to the north, Singapore to the northwest and Australia to the south. The capital Jakarta is situated at 6S106E position.

Indonesia is the 14th largest country by area in the world after Russia, Canada, USA, China, Brazil, Australia, India, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Algeria, DR Congo, Saudi Arabia and Mexico. It is also the 4th most populous country in the world after India, China and the USA. Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country, the second most populous being Pakistan. There are close to 17,000 islands in Indonesia and Indonesia is the largest archipelago state in the world. These include big islands like Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, and parts of Borneo and New Guinea. Java is the most populous island in the world and is home to more than half of the Indonesian population. The capital Jakarta is the second most populous urban area in the world. Due to weight of the infrastructure, the capital is slowly sinking into the sea. Plans to reduce infrastructure and population in the capital are now a government priority.

Bahasa Indonesian is the official language of Indonesia. There are over 700 other languages and 1300 ethnic groups in the country, with Javanese being the largest community. A shared identity has developed with the motto Tunggal Ika literally meaning Many Yet One. The motto translates into Unity in Diversity, defined by a national language, cultural diversity, religious pluralism within a Muslim majority population, and a history of colonialism and rebellion against it. Indonesia is the third largest democracy in the world. It is a regional and a middle global power. Apart from Muslims and Christians, there are Hindus forming 1.7 per cent of the population in Indonesia. These are mostly restricted to Bali Island. Sumatra is one of the largest Indonesian islands located in its west. Some forces are instigating the separation of the North West Aceh province from Sumatra. Aceh sits at the Malacca Strait entrance and is situated close to the Indian Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal.

Despite its large population and densely populated regions, Indonesia has vast areas of wilderness that support one of the highest levels of biodiversity.

The Indonesian archipelago has been a valuable region for trade since at least the 7th century when the Srivijaya and later Majapahit Kingdoms traded with entities from mainland China and the Indian subcontinent. Local rulers gradually absorbed foreign influences from the early centuries, and Hindu and Buddhist Kingdoms flourished. Sunni traders and Sufi scholars later brought Islam, and European powers fought one another to monopolise trade in the Spice Islands of Maluku during the Age of Discovery. Following three and a half centuries of Dutch colonialism, Indonesia secured its independence after World War 2. Indonesian history has since been turbulent, with challenges posed by natural disaster, corruption, separatism, democratisation process and periods of rapid economic growth.

Indonesia is a unitary presidential republic. Its population density is 143 per square kilometre. Indonesia has a mixed economy in which the private sector and government play vital roles. As the only G20 member state in Southeast Asia, the country has the largest economy in the region and is classified as a newly industrialised country. It has the 7th largest nominal GDP and 16th largest GDP at PPP. The former is 1.5 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 5000 dollars and GDP PPP is 4.3 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 16,000 dollars.

Services account for 43 % of the GDP followed by industry representing 40 % and agriculture another 13 %. Services employ 48 % of the total labour force, agriculture 30 % and industry 22 %.

Over time the structure of the economy has changed considerably. Historically, it has been weighted heavily towards agricultural self-sufficiency reflecting both economic development and government policies in the 1950s and 1960s. A gradual process of industrialisation and urbanisation began in the late 1960s and accelerated in the 1980s as falling oil prices saw the governmental focus on diversifying away from oil

exports and towards manufacturing exports. The development continued throughout the 1980s and into the next decade despite the 1990 oil price shock. During this period, the GDP rose at an average rate of 7 %. As a result, the official poverty rate fell from 60 % to 15 %.

Trade barriers reduction from the mid-1980s made the economy more globally integrated. The growth ended with the 1997 Asian financial crisis that severely impacted the economy, including a 13 % real GDP contraction in 1998 and 78 % inflation. The lowest point came in mid-1999 with only 1 % real GDP growth.

Relatively steady inflation and an increase in GDP deflator and the Consumer Price Index have contributed to strong economic growth in recent years. From 2007 to 2019, annual growth accelerated to nearly 5 % due to improvements in the banking sector and domestic consumption. This helped Indonesia weather the 2008-2009 Great Recessions and regain in 2011 the investment grade rating it had lost in 1997. 9 % of its population lives below the poverty line, and its unemployment is 5 %. During the first year of the COVID 19, the economy suffered its first recession since the 1997 crisis but recovered in the following year. Indonesia has abundant natural resources. Its primary industries are fishing, petroleum, timber, paper products, cotton cloth, tourism, petroleum mining, natural gas, bauxite, coal and tin. Its main agricultural products are rice, coconuts, soybeans, bananas, coffee, tea, palm, rubber and sugar cane. These commodities make up a large portion of the exports, with palm oil and coal briquettes leading. The primary imports include refined and crude petroleum. Telephones, vehicle parts and wheat cover the majority of additional imports. China, the United States, Japan, Singapore, India, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand are principal export markets and import partners.

Indonesia is a member of the UN, WTO and G20 and a founding member of NAM, ASEAN, East Asia Summit, D8 and the OIC.

IRAN

Islamic Republic of Iran (Demonym: Iranian) with Capital: Tehran has Population: 90 million in Area: 1,648000. Its Languages are Persian, Turkic and Religion: Muslim 100%. Its Currency is Rial.

Also known as Persia, Iran is a country in Western Asia. It is bordered by Iraq to the west; Turkey to the northwest; Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan to the north; Afghanistan to the east, Pakistan to the southeast and the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to the south. The capital Tehran is located at

36N51E position. 2 % of the Iranian terrain consists of water. Iran is a regional and middle power and occupies a strategic location in the Asian continent.

Iran is the 17th largest country in the world, both in terms of area and population. In the Middle East it is second to Saudi Arabia in area. Its central location in Eurasia and West Asia and proximity to Strait of Hormuz render it strategically vital. Tehran is the largest capital in West Asia and it has a population of 16 million. Iran has 135 billion barrels in oil reserves, the fourth highest after Venezuelan 300 billion barrels, Saudi 262 billion barrels and Canadian 165 billion barrels. Iran also has the second largest gas reserves in the world.

Historically, a multi-ethnic country, Iran remains a pluralistic society comprising numerous ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Its rich cultural legacy is reflected in part in its 27 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which ranks 10th worldwide. Iran is placed 5th globally in terms of Intangible Cultural heritage. Apart from 51 % Persians, there are 24 % Azerbaijanis in Iran. The remaining ethnic groups include 8 % Gilaks and Mazanderanis, 7 % Kurds, 3 % Arabs, 2 % Lurs, 2 % Baluchis, 1 % Turkmens, and 1 % others including Armenians, Jews, Assyrians, Qashqais and Shahsevan.

Iran is home to one of the oldest civilisations in the world. It began with the formation of the Elamite kingdoms in the fourth millennium BC. It was first unified by the Medes in the 7th century BC and it reached its territorial peak in the 6th century BC, when Cyrus the Great founded the Archaemenid Empire. Alexander the Great conquered the empire in the fourth century BC, and it was subsequently divided into several Hellenistic states. An Iranian rebellion established the Parthian Empire in the third century BC, which was succeeded by the Sasanian Empire in the third century AD.

Arab Muslims conquered the empire in the 7th century AD, leading to its Islamisation; Iran, thereafter, became a major centre of Islamic culture and learning. Over the next two centuries, a series of native Iranian Muslim dynasties emerged before the Seljuk and the Mongols conquered the region and in the 16th century, the native Safavids re-established a unified Iranian state. Under the reign of Nadir Shah in the 18th century, Iran presided over the most powerful military in the world, though by the 19th century, a series of conflicts with the Russian Empire led to significant territorial losses. The early 20th century saw the Persian Constitutional Revolution. Efforts to nationalise its fossil fuel supply led to an Anglo-American coup in 1953. After the Iranian Revolution, the current Islamic Republic was established in 1979 by Rohullah Khomeini, who became the first supreme leader of the country.

The Iranian government is an Islamic republic with a presidential system, though ultimate authority is vested in a theoretic Rahbar; the position has been held by Ali Khamenei after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Iran is a focal point for Shia Islam within the Middle East. Since the Iranian Revolution, the country is considered to be the most determined adversary of Israel and Saudi Arabia. On March 10, 2023,

Iran and Saudi Arabia normalised relations after years of hostility. Iran is criticised for its sponsorship of terrorism and proxy militias in the Middle Eastern conflicts.

The Iranian economy is a mixture of central planning, state ownership of oil and other large enterprises, village agriculture, and small scale private trading and service ventures. It is ranked as a lower middle income economy by the World Bank. The service sector contributes the largest percentage of the GDP, followed by industry including mining and manufacturing, and agriculture.

Its GDP PPP of 1.7 trillion dollars is 19th highest in the world. Its per capita GDP PPP is 20,000 dollars, 79th in the world. Its GDP nominal is 66 billion dollars, 42nd in the world and GDP nominal per capita is 4200 dollars, 120th in the world. Its time zone is UTC + 3.5 hours.

Trade unions other than the Islamic labour councils are not recognised by the government. Unemployment is 10 % for men and 20 % for women. 45 % of the government budget comes from oil and natural gas revenues, and 31 % from taxes and fees. Iran has leading manufacturing industries in the fields of automobiles, construction materials, home appliances, food and agriculture goods, armament, pharmaceuticals, information technology and petrochemicals. In agriculture field, Iran is among the top 5 world producers of apricot, cherries, cucumbers, dates, eggplants, figs, pistachios, quinces, walnuts and watermelons.

Iran earns 70 billion dollars from crude oil exports. Budget deficit is a chronic problem mostly due to large scale state subsidies that include foodstuffs and gasoline, totalling 84 billion dollars per annum for energy sector alone. Subsidies are gradually decreasing to move towards free market. Efforts are being made to diversify oil-reliant economy. Biotechnology, nanotechnology and pharmaceutical industry have been developed. Nationalised industries such as the bonyads have been managed badly and they are ineffective and uncompetitive. These are being privatised. The public sector has nagging corruption in its functions.

Economic sanctions against Iran have damaged the economy. A deal was reached on the nuclear programme and main sanctions were lifted in 2016. However, the renewed US sanctions against Iran led to a sharp downturn in the economy. The currency value went to record lows and the inflation quadrupled. This resulted in driving away foreign investors and triggering protests. Iran is a founding member of the UN, ECO, OIC, OPEC, SCO and BRICS.

IRAQ

Republic of Iraq (Demonym: Iraqi) with Capital: Baghdad has Population: 47 million in Area: 437,072. Its Languages are Arabic and Kurdish and Religion: Muslim 99%, Christian 1%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Iraq is a country in West Asia and the geopolitical region known as Middle East. It borders Turkey to the north; Iran to the east; the Persian Gulf and Kuwait to the southeast; Saudi Arabia to the south; Jordan to the southwest and Syria to the west. Its capital is also its largest city.

Starting as early as the 6th millennium BC, the fertile alluvial plains between Iraq's Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, referred to as Mesopotamia, gave rise to some of the world's earliest cities, civilisations and empires in Sumer, Akkad, and Assyria. Mesopotamia was the cradle of civilisations that saw the inventions of a writing system, mathematics, timekeeping, a calendar, astrology and a law code. Following the Muslim conquest of Mesopotamia, Baghdad became the capital and the largest city of the Abbasid Caliphate, and during the Islamic Golden Age, the city evolved into a significant cultural and intellectual centre, and garnered a worldwide reputation for its academic institutions, including the House of Wisdom. The city was largely destroyed at the hands of the Mongol Empire in 1258 during the siege of Baghdad, resulting in a decline that would linger through many centuries due to frequent plagues and multiple successive empires.

Modern-day Iraq dates to 1920, when a Mandate was created by League of Nations. A British backed monarchy was founded in 1921 under Faisal. The Hashemite Kingdom gained independence from UK in 1932. In 1958, the kingdom was overthrown and a republic was created. Iraq was ruled by the Baath Party from 1968 to 2003, led by Al-Bakr and then by Saddam Husain, as a one-party state. Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, sparking a war that ended as a stalemate in 1988. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, leading to a military campaign waged by a US-led international coalition that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait. An invasion launched by another US-led coalition as part of its War on Terror in 2003 resulted in the defeat of Baathists and Saddam's execution. Discontent with the policies of the Provisional Authority stirred up an anti-American insurgency, which escalated into a sectarian civil war. In 2005, a new constitution was adopted and multi-party parliamentary elections were held. Withdrawal of US troops began in 2008, and the occupation officially ended in 2011. Continued repression and sectarian policies of the Shia government caused protests, after which a coalition of Baathist and Sunni militias took up arms during a campaign. The climax of the campaign was the North Iraq offensive by the ISID that marked its rapid territorial expansion, prompting the return of American troops to fight the war, which lasted until 2017. Iran has also intervened since 2014, expanding its influence through sectarian parties and Iran friendly militia groups triggering widespread protests.

Iraq is a federal parliamentary republic. The president is the head of state and prime minister heads the government. The country is considered an emerging middle

power, with strategic location. Iraq has 120 billion barrels of oil reserves, the fourth highest in the world. 77 % of its people are Arab and 17 % Kurd. Its population density is 83 and GDP nominal 255 billion with a per capita value of 6000 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 3. It is a founding member of the UN, the OPEC, AL, OIC NAM and IMF.

IRELAND

Republic of Ireland (Demonym: Irish) with Capital: Dublin has Population: 5 million In Area: 70280. Its Languages are English and Irish and Religion: Christian 92%, Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Euro.

Ireland is an island country in north Western Europe in North Atlantic Ocean. It is separated from Britain in the east by North Channel, the Irish Sea and Saint George's Channel. It shares land border only with Northern Ireland.

Ireland is the second largest of British Isles, 3rd largest island in Europe and 20th in the world. Ireland is Catholic as opposed to its Protestant eastern neighbour.

The Irish Free State was created with dominion status in 1922, following the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1937. A new constitution was adopted, in which the state was named Ireland. It was officially declared a republic in 1949 and it became a UN member in 1955. It joined the European Communities (EC) in 1973. Tensions remained with Northern Ireland till the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 brought peace.

Ireland is a developed country, with a quality of life rated among the highest in the world. It ranks high in healthcare, economic freedom and freedom of press. Its HDI is 6th highest in the world. Inequality is its only problem. 77% of its population is white Irish and 70% Christians are Catholic. Its population density is 71 and GDP nominal 590 billion dollars with a per capita value of 112,000 dollars. It is among the wealthiest countries in GDP. Its HDI of 0.950 is the 6th highest in the world and its time UTC.

It is a member of the EU, and founding member of CoE, and OECD. The Irish government has followed a policy of military neutrality since WW2 and has thus not joined NATO.

ISRAEL

State of Israel (Demonym: Israeli) with Capital: Jerusalem has Population of 10 million in an Area of 22,072. Its Languages are Hebrew and Arabic and Religion: Jews 75%, Muslim 19%. Its Currency is Shekel.

Israel is a country in the Southern Levant region of West Asia. It is bordered by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, the Red Sea to the south, Egypt to the southwest, the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Palestinian territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip along its southwest. Tel Aviv is the financial, economic and technological centre of the country, while its seat of government is in its proclaimed capita of Jerusalem, although Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem is unrecognised internationally. Israel is not recognized by majority of the Muslim countries.

Israel is located in a region also known as Canaan, Palestine and the Holy Land. In antiquity, it was home to several Canaanite, and later Israelite and Judahite states. The region was successfully conquered by the Assyrian, Babylonian, Achaemenid, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine empires, Arab Caliphates, Crusaders, Ayyubids, Mamluks, and Ottomans. The late 19th century saw the rise of Zionism in Europe, a movement seeking a Jewish homeland, which garnered British support during WW1. During the war, the Ottomans were defeated and the British Mandate for Palestine was set up in 1920. Jewish migration to Mandatory Palestine increased considerably, leading to intercommunal conflict between Jews and Arabs. The 1947 UN Partition Plan triggered a civil war between the two groups, which saw the expulsion and flight of most of Palestine's predominantly Arab population.

The state of Israel declared its establishment in 1948, the day the British terminated the mandate. In May 1948, the armies of the Arab states invaded Israel starting the First Arab- Israel War. The 1949 Armistice saw Israel's borders established over most of the former Mandate territory, while the rest, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were taken by Jordan and Egypt respectively. The 1967 Six-Day War saw Israel occupying the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and the Syrian Golan Heights. It has since established and continues to expand settlements across the occupied territories, actions which are deemed illegal under international law, and annexed both East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, which are largely unrecognised internationally. Since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel has signed peace treaties with Egypt, returning the Sinai Peninsula, and with Jordan, and more recently normalised relations with several Arab countries. However, efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestine conflict have not succeeded. Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories has drawn accusations of war crimes.

The country has a parliamentary system. The prime minister is elected by the Knesset, the unicameral legislature. It has one of the biggest economies in the Middle East by nominal GDP, and is one of the richest and technologically advanced

countries in Asia. 73% of its people are Jew and 21% Arab. Its population density is 450 and GDP nominal 521 billion with a per capita value of 53,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high and time UTC + 2. It is a member of the OECD.

ITALY

Italian Republic (Demonym: Italian) with Capital: Rome has Population: 60 million in Area: 301,230. Its Languages are Italian and German and Religion: Christian 84% and Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Euro.

Italy is a country in Southern and Western Europe. Located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, it consists of a peninsula surrounded by the Alps and several islands, notably Sicily and Sardinia. Italy is bordered by France to the west; Switzerland to the northwest; Austria to the north and Slovenia to the northeast. In term of borders, Italy also has two enclave microstates namely San Marino and Vatican City. Vatican City lies within Rome and is the centre of Catholicism. Its capital is also its largest city. By coincidence, Italy resembles a shoe and Italian shoes are world famous. Its two territorial exclaves include Campion in Switzerland and Pelagie Islands, an archipelago in the Tunisian Sea lying in the African Plate. It is the 10th largest country by land area in the European continent and the 4th most populous state of the EU.

In antiquity, the Italian peninsula was home to numerous peoples; the Latin city of Rome in Central Italy, founded as a Kingdom, became a Republic that conquered the Mediterranean world and ruled it for centuries as an Empire. With the spread of Christianity, Rome became the seat of the Catholic Church and Papacy. During the early Middle Ages, Italy experienced the fall of the Western Roman Empire and inward immigration from German tribes. By the 11th century, Italian city states and maritime republics expanded, bringing renewed prosperity through commerce and laying the groundwork for modern capitalism. The Italian Renaissance flourished in Florence during the 15th and 16th centuries and spread to the rest of Europe. Italian explorers also discovered new routes to the Far East and the New World, leading the European Age of Discovery. However, centuries of rivalry and infighting between the Italian city states among other factors left the peninsula divided into numerous states until the late modern period. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Italian economic and commercial importance significantly waned.

After centuries of political and territorial divisions, Italy was almost entirely unified in 1861 following Wars of independence and the Expedition of the Thousand, establishing the Kingdom of Italy. From the late 19th to the early 20th century, Italy rapidly industrialised, mainly in the north, and acquired a colonial empire, while the

south remained largely impoverished and excluded from industrialisation, fueling a large immigrant diaspora. From 1915 to 1918, Italy took part in WW1 on the side of the Entente against the Central Powers. In 1922, following a period of crisis and turmoil, the Italian fascist dictatorship was established. During WW2, Italy was part of the Axis until its surrender to the Allied powers between 1940 and 1943. Then, as parts of its territory were occupied by Nazi Germany with fascist collaborations, it became a co-belligerent of the Allies during the Italian resistance and the liberation of Italy during 1943 to 1945. Following the end of the war, the monarchy was replaced by republic via referendum resulting in prolonged economic prosperity, often termed as economic miracle.

The country is the source of multiple inventions and discoveries, and is considered as a cultural superpower. It has long been a global centre of art, music, literature, cuisine, science, technology, and fashion. It has 58 World Heritage Sites, the largest in the world and is the 5th most visited country in the world. Italy is a unitary parliamentary republic. Its parliament consists of a senate and chamber of deputies. 91 % of its population is Italian. Its population density is 200, HDI 0.906, very high, and time is UTC+1.

Italy's GDP nominal of 2 trillion dollars is the 8th largest in the world, with a per capita value of 37,000 dollars. Its manufacturing industry is the 2nd largest in Europe and the 7th largest in the world. It has a significant role in regional and global economic, military, cultural, and diplomatic affairs. Italy is a founding and leading member of the EU, and it is in numerous international institutions including NATO, the G7, the Mediterranean Union and the Latin Union.

IVORY COAST

Republic of Cote d'Ivoire (Demonym: Ivorian) with Capital: Yamoussoukro has Population: 30 million in Area: 322,460. Its Languages are French and Dioula and Religion: Muslim 39% and Christian 33 %. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Ivory Coast lies on the southern coast of West Africa. It is bordered by Liberia to the west; Guinea to the northwest; Mali and Burkina Faso to the north; Ghana to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea in Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Ivory Coast has a relatively longer coastline in the Gulf of Guinea in comparison with its neighbours including Ghana, Togo, Benin and even Nigeria. 78 % of its population is Ivorian by ethnicity and 22 % non-Ivorian. Its population density is 90 per square kilometre. Independence from France was achieved in 1960.

Its GDP per capita is 2700 dollars and it has the largest economy in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. It is the fourth largest exporter of general goods in sub-Saharan Africa following South Africa, Nigeria and Angola and the largest exporter of cocoa beans in the world. Rubber farming too is its vital earning source.

Close ties to France, diversification of agricultural exports and encouragement of foreign investment have been major factors in its economic growth. Ivory Coast plays a key role in transit trade for the neighbouring landlocked countries like Mali and Burkina Faso in the north, dependent on their neighbours for port facilities. The largest city in Ivory Coast is the port city of Abidjan. Ivory Coast has been through civil war based on individual power struggle. The first three presidents were Christian and the present leader is a Muslim. Alassane Ouattara has been in office since 2010. Samuel Philip Huntington considered Ivory Coast as one of the probable core states of African civilisation apart from South Africa and Nigeria.

JAMAICA

Jamaica (Demonym: Jamaican) with Capital Kingston has a Population of 3 million in an Area of 10981. Its Languages are English and Creole and Religion: Christian 69 %. Its Currency is Dollar.

Jamaica is an island microstate in Caribbean Sea. It is 145 kilometres south of Cuba, 190 kilometres west of Hispaniola and 215 kilometres south west of Cayman Islands. Jamaica is the third largest island of the Greater Antilles and the Caribbean after Cuba and Hispaniola. The capital Kingston is also the largest city in Jamaica.

The population density in Jamaica is 266. Among Christians, 65 % are Protestant. It is the third most populous Anglophone country in the Americas after the USA and Canada, and the fourth most populous in the Caribbean. The majority of Jamaicans are of Sub-Saharan African ancestry, with significant numbers of Europeans, East Asians mostly Chinese, Indians and Lebanese. Due to a high rate of emigration for work since the 1960s, there is a large Jamaican diaspora, particularly in Canada, the UK and the USA.

Originally inhabited by the indigenous Taino people, the island came under Spanish rule following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494. Many of the indigenous people were either killed or died of diseases, after which the Spanish brought large numbers of African slaves as labourers. It remained under Spain till 1655 under the name Santiago, when England conquered it and named it Jamaica. It was an important part of the colonial British West Indies.

Under the British rule, Jamaica became a leading sugar exporter, with a plantation economy dependent on importation of slaves and their descendants. The slaves were fully emancipated in 1838, and many of them chose subsistence farming rather than working on plantations. Beginning in the 1840s, the British began using Chinese and Indian indentured labour to work on plantations. It gained independence from the UK in 1962.

GDP nominal per capita in Jamaica is 7,000 dollars. The Jamaican economy is mixed with both state enterprises and private sector businesses. Major sectors of the economy include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism, petroleum refining, financial and insurance services. Among these sectors, tourism and mining are the leading earners of foreign exchange. Half the economy relies on services and tourism accounts for half of them. An estimated 4 million tourists visit Jamaica every year. It has a considerable amount of industrial engineering and light manufacturing including furniture. In overall perspective, the economy is liberal with emphasis on free trade. It is vulnerable to climate change, flooding and hurricanes.

Jamaica has a global influence that belies its small size. It is birthplace of the Rastafari religion and reggae music. It is also prominent in sports most notably cricket, sprinting and athletics. It is viewed as the least populous cultural superpower in the world.

JAPAN

Japan (Demonym: Japanese) with Capital: Tokyo has a Population of 130 million in an Area of 377,835. Its Language is Japanese and Religion: Buddhist 36%, Christian 2%. Its Currency is Yen.

Japan is a country in East Asia off its coast. It stretches from Sea of Okhotsk in the north to East China Sea and the Philippines Sea in the south for 3000 kilometres in the Pacific. It does not have land borders.

Japan is called the Land of the Rising Sun. With its 14,125 islands Japan is the 4th largest island country in the world. It is the second most populous island country and 11th most populous in the world. The Greater Tokyo area is the world's most populous area with 38 million inhabitants. 73% of Japan is forested, mountainous and generally unsuitable for agriculture, industrial or residential use. Habitable zones are mainly located in the limited coastal areas. This makes Japan as one of the most densely populated world nations. Reclamation started in the 12th century and today, its 0.5 % area is reclaimed.

Japan falls in the Pacific Ring of Fire. During the 20th century, several new volcanoes emerged and presently it has 108 of them. Among the countries most vulnerable to natural disaster, Japan ranks 15th from the top. Destructive earthquakes often resulting in tsunami have occurred several times in each century. 140,000 people died in the Tokyo earthquake of 1923. Then there were earthquakes in 1995 and 2011. The latter of the two was 9.1 in magnitude and it triggered a tsunami. Japan is the only country to have suffered nuclear attacks.

The Japanese archipelago has been inhabited since the Upper Palaeolithic, 30,000 BC. Between the 4th and 9th centuries AD, the Kingdoms of the region became unified under an emperor and the imperial court. Beginning in the 12th century, political power was held by a series of military dictators, Shogun, and feudal lords, Daimyo, and enforced by a class of warrior nobility, samurai. After a century of civil war, it was reunified in 1603 and isolationist foreign policy was enacted. In 1854, a US fleet forced Japan to open trade to the West, which led to restoration of imperial power in 1868. In the Meiji period, the Empire adopted a Western modelled constitution, and pursued a program of industrialisation and modernisation. Amid a rise in militarism and overseas colonisation, Japan invaded China in 1937 and entered WW2 as an Axis Power in 1941. After suffering defeat in the Pacific War, and two atomic bombings, Japan surrendered in 1945 and came under a Seven-year Allied occupation, during which it adopted a new constitution.

Under the 1947 constitution, Japan has maintained a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature, the National Diet. Japan is a developed country and a great power, with one of the largest economies by nominal GDP. Japan has renounced its right to declare war, though it maintains a Self Defence Force that ranks as one of the strongest militaries. A global leader in the automotive robotics, and electronics industries, the country has made significant contributions to science and technology, and is one of the world's largest exporters and importers. It is part of multiple major international organisations. Japan has one of the world's longest life expectancies but has a population decline due to its very low birth rate.

Japan is a cultural superpower and its culture is well known around the world including its art, cuisine, film, music and popular culture which encompasses prominent manga, anime, and video game industries.

Its population density is 330 and GDP PPP 6.7 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 55,000 dollars. GDP nominal is 4.1 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 33,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.920, very high, 24th. Time is UTC + 9.

JORDAN

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Demonym: Jordanian) with Capital: Amman has Population: 11.5 million in an Area: 89,342. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 95%, Christian 3%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Jordan is a country in the Southern Levant region of West Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north; Iraq to the east, Saudi Arabia to the south and the occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank and Israel to the west. The Jordan River, flowing into the Dead Sea, is located along its western border. It has a 26 kilometre long coastline along the Red Sea in the extreme southwest, separated by the Gulf of Aqaba from Egypt. Amman is the largest and the most populous city in the Levant. Jordan is strategically located at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe.

Modern-day Jordan has been inhabited by humans since the Palaeolithic period. Three kingdoms emerged in Transjordan at the end of the Bronze Age; Ammon, Moab and Edom. In the third century BC, the Arab Nabataeans established their kingdom centred in Petra. Later rulers of the Transjordan region include the Assyrian, Babylonian, Roman, Byzantine, Rashidun, Umayyad, Abbasid, and the Ottoman empires. After the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 during WW1, the Greater Syria region was partitioned by Britain and France. The Emirate of Transjordan was established in 1921 by the Hashemite Amir, Abdullah 1, and the emirate became a British protectorate. In 1946, Jordan gained independence and became officially known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is a constitutional monarchy. The country captured and annexed the West Bank during the 1948 Arab-Israel War until it was occupied by Israel in 1967. Jordan renounced its claim to the territory of the Palestinians in 1988, and signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

95 % of its people are Arab, and 3 %, Circassian and Chechen. Muslim population is 95 % Sunni and there are 1 % people of Druz Bahai faith. Population density is 114.

Jordan is a founding member of the Arab League and the OIC. It has a lower middle income economy and its skilled work force attracts foreign investors. Its medical tourism is attractive due to its well-developed health sector. Jordan is a semi-arid country. From as early as 1948, Jordan has accepted refugees from multiple neighbouring countries in conflict including 2 million Palestinians, 1.5 million Syrians and thousands of Christians from Iraq. These place strain on national resources and infrastructure. Lack of natural resources, large flow of refugees and regional turmoil hamper economic growth. Its GDP nominal is 50 billion with a per capita value of 5000 dollars. Its HDI is high and its time is UTC + 3.

KAZAKHSTAN

Republic of Kazakhstan (Demonym: Kazakhstani) with Capital: Astana has Population: 20 million in an Area of 2,717300. Its Languages include Kazakh and Russian and Religion Muslim 70% and Christian 25%. Its Currency is Tenge.

Kazakhstan is a transcontinental landlocked country located mainly in Central Asia and partly in Eastern Europe. It lies south and west of Russia, west of Mongolia, northwest of China and Kyrgyzstan, north of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and northeast of the Caspian Sea. It extends on both sides of the Ural River.

Kazakhstan has the largest area amongst the 51 majority Muslim countries of the world. It is the 9th largest country by area and the largest landlocked country in the world. Its area equals the entire area of Western Europe. During the Soviet rule, it lost some area to Xinjian province of China and some to Uzbekistan.

With a population density of a mere 6 per square kilometre, Kazakhstan is among the least densely countries like Mongolia, Australia and Namibia. 70 % of its population is Kazakh and 15 % Russian who were moved in to offset the Muslim majority. Uzbek, Ukrainian, Uyghur, German and Tatar make up the remaining population. 15 % Christians adhere to Orthodoxy. Senate is the upper house and Majlis the lower house.

Kazakh Khanate was founded in 1465. It became a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1920 and achieved sovereignty in 1990. Its GDP nominal per capita is 12,000 dollars and it has HDI of 0.811 that is considered very high. It uses time UTC+ 5 and 6.

Kazakhstan has an abundant supply of accessible mineral and fossil fuel resources. Development of petroleum, natural gas and mineral extraction has attracted most of the over 40 billion dollars in foreign investment since 1993. It accounts for 57 % of the industrial output. Kazakhstan has the second highest uranium, chromium, lead and zinc reserves, the third largest manganese, and fifth largest copper reserves in the world. It ranks among the top ten countries in coal, iron and gold and its petroleum and gas reserves each are the eleventh largest in the world.

One location in gas reserves is the Tokarevskoye gas condensate field. In total there are 160 deposits with over 30 billion barrels of petroleum in reserves. The Caspian Sea is only a small part of the deposits. As there are only three oil refineries, so some crude output is exported to Russia.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative accepted Kazakhstan as EITI compliant, meaning that the country has a basic and functional process to ensure the regular disclosure of natural resource revenues.

KENYA

Republic of Kenya (Demony: Kenyan) with Capital: Nairobi has Population: 53 million in an Area of 582,659. Its Languages are Kiswahili and English and Religion: Christian 86%, Muslim 11%. Its Currency is Shilling.

Kenya is a country in East Africa. It borders South Sudan to the northwest; Ethiopia to the north; Somalia and the Indian Ocean to the east; and Lake Victoria and Uganda to the west. The Equator passes through Kenya.

Kenya is the 28th most populous country in the world and 7th most populous in Africa. Its capital is the largest city, while its oldest and the second largest city is the major port city of Mombasa, situated on the synonymous island in the Indian Ocean and the surrounding mainland. Mombasa was the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate, which included most of what is now Kenya and south-western Somalia, from 1889 to 1907. Other important cities in Kenya include Kisumu and Nakuru.

Kenya's geography, climate and population vary widely. There are cold snow-capped mountaintops including Batian, Nellon and Point Lenana on Mount Kenya. Then there are vast forests with wildlife. In temperate climates, there are fertile agricultural regions in western and rift valley regions. Further on there are dry less fertile, arid, and semi-arid areas and absolute deserts including Chalbi and Nyiri.

Kenya's earliest inhabitants were hunter-gatherers, like the present-day Hadza people. According to archaeological dating of associated artefacts and skeletal material, Cushitic speakers first settled in Kenya's lowlands between 3200 and 1300 BC, a phase known as the Lowland Savannah Pastoral Neolithic. Nilotic speaking pastoralists, ancestral to Kenya's Nilotic speakers, began migrating from present-day South Sudan into Kenya around 599 BC. Bantu people settled at the coast and the interior between 250 BC and 500 AD.

European contact of Kenya began in 1500 AD with the Portuguese Empire, and effective colonisation of Kenya began in the 19th century during the European exploration of the interior. Modern-day Kenya emerged from a protectorate established by the British Empire in 1895 and the subsequent Kenya colony, which began in 1920. Numerous disputes between the UK and the colony led to the Mau Revolution, which began in 1952, and the declaration of independence in 1963. After independence, Kenya remained a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Kenya is a presidential representative democratic republic, in which elected officials represent the people and the president is head of the state. 17 % of its people are Kikuyu, 14 % Luhya and 13 % Kalenjin. 60 % Christians are Protestant and population density is 82.

Kenya is a lower-middle-income economy that is the second largest in eastern and central Africa, after Ethiopia, with Nairobi serving as a major regional commercial hub. Agriculture is the largest sector; tea and coffee are traditional cash crops, while

fresh flowers are a fast-growing export. The service industry, particularly tourism is also a major economic driver. Kenya is a member of the East African Community trade bloc, though some international trade organisations categorise it as part of the Great Horn of Africa. Africa is Kenya's largest export market, followed by the EU.

Its GDP nominal is 112 billion dollars with a per capita value of 2200 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 3. Kenya is a member of the UN, the Commonwealth, World Bank, IMF, COMESA, International Criminal Court, and other organisations.

KIRIBATI

Republic of Kiribati (Demonym: I-Kiribati) with Capital: Tarawa has a Population: 120,000 in an Area: 811. Its Languages are English and I-Kiribati and Religion: Christian 97%. Its Currency is Australian Dollar.

It is an island nation in the Micronesia sub region of Oceania in central part of the Pacific Ocean, east of Australia. It has Tuvalu to the south west; Nauru to the west; Marshal Islands to the northwest, French Polynesia to the southeast and American Samoa to the south.

Kiribati is amongst the least known countries of the world. More than half of its population lives on Trawa atoll (An atoll is a ring shaped coral reef, island or series of islets. An atoll surrounds a body of water called a lagoon. Sometimes atolls and lagoons protect a central island. Channels between islets connect a lagoon to the Open Ocean or sea.)

The island spread straddles the equator as well as the International Date Line. Line Islands south of Hawaii are at 150W longitude and their time is UTC plus 14. This is also the time of the Gilbert Islands.

Kiribati gained independence from the United Kingdom, becoming a sovereign state in 1979. 95 % of its population is Gilbertese and 96 % of its citizens adhere to Christianity. Its population density is 152 per square kilometre.

Banaba is an isolated island between Nauru and the Gilbert Islands. Gilbert Islands are 16 atolls, 1500 kilometres north of Fiji. Phoenix Islands are 8 atolls and coral islands located some 1800 kilometres east of the Gilberts. Line Islands are 8 atolls and one reef located some 3300 kilometres east of the Gilberts.

Kiribati has few natural resources. Commercially viable phosphate deposits on Banaba were exhausted at the time of independence. Copra and fish now represent

the bulk of production and exports. Most of the income is from abroad. Examples are fishing licenses, development assistance and worker remittances, especially the seafarers issued from Marine Training Centre. Tourism in the country is limited. Due to limited domestic production, foodstuff and manufactured items are almost totally imported by Kiribati. Its economy benefits from international development assistance programmes to some extent. Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Taiwan are among its donors, but its major donations come from the European Union, the UN and the WHO. The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank too provide donations and technical assistance to Kiribati.

KOSOVO

Republic of Kosovo (Demonym: Kosovar) with Capital: Pristine has Population: 2 million in an Area of 10887. Its Languages are Albanian and Serbian and Religion: Muslim 93%, Christian 6%. Its Currency is Euro.

Kosovo is a country in Southeast Europe with partial diplomatic recognition. It is landlocked in the centre of Balkans and is bordered by Serbia to the north and east, North Macedonia to the southeast, Albania to the southwest, and Montenegro to the west. Most of central Kosovo is dominated by the vast plains and fields of Metohija and the Kosovo field. The Accursed Mountains and Sar Mountains rise in the southwest and southeast respectively. Its capital is also its largest city.

Kosovo is claimed by Serbia as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija under UN Resolution 1244. Albanian and Serbian are official languages in Kosovo. 92 % Kosovars are ethnic Albanians and 4 % are Serbs. Kosovan is also used as Demonym in addition to Kosovar. Population density is 160. GDP nominal is 11 billion with a per capita value of 6400 dollars. Its time is UTC+ 1.

The Dardani tribe emerged in Kosovo and established the Kingdom of Dardania in the 4th century BC. It was later annexed by the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC. The territory remained in the Byzantine Empire, facing Slavic migrations from the 6th century AD. Control shifted between the Byzantines and the First Bulgarian Empire. In the 13th century, Kosovo became integral to the Serbian medieval state and the seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Ottoman expansion in the Balkans in the late 14th and 15th century led to the decline and fall of the Serbian Empire. The battle of Kosovo of 1389 is considered to be one of the defining moments, where a Serbian led Christian coalition that also included Albanians, fought against the Ottoman Empire. Various dynasties, mainly the Brankovic governed Kosovo for a significant portion of the period following the battle. The Ottoman Empire fully conquered Kosovo after the Second Battle of Kosovo, ruling for nearly 5 centuries until 1912.

Kosovo was the centre of the Albanian Renaissance and it experienced the Albanian revolts of 1910 to 1912. After the Balkan Wars, it was ceded to Serbia and Montenegro and became an autonomous province within Yugoslavia. Following tensions between Albanian and Serb communities, Kosovo declared independence unilaterally in 2008. It has been recognised by 104 UN member states. Serbia does not recognise Kosovo officially but accepts the governing authority of the Kosovo institutions under the 2013 Brussels Agreement.

Kosovo is a developing country, with an upper middle income economy. It has experienced solid economic growth since its independence. It is a member of the IMF, the World Bank, the EBRD, the Venice Commission and the International Olympic Committee. It has applied for membership in Council of Europe, UNESCO, and Interpol. It has also applied for observer status in the OIC. In addition, in 2022, it applied for EU membership.

KUWAIT

State of Kuwait (Demonym: Kuwaiti) with Capital: Kuwait City has Population: 4.3 million in Area: 17,820. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 77%, Christian 13%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Kuwait is a country in West Asia. It is situated in the northern edge of Eastern Arabia at the tip of the Persian Gulf, bordering Iraq to the northwest and Saudi Arabia to the south. Kuwait also shares maritime borders with Iran. It has a coastal length of nearly 500 kilometres. Most of the population resides in the urban agglomeration of the capital and largest city.

1.53 million people are Kuwaiti citizens while the remaining 3.3 million are foreign nationals from over 100 countries. 60 % Kuwaitis are Arabs and 40 % Asians. The majority of the Muslim population adheres to the Maliki school of Sunni Islam. Its population density in Kuwait is 200.

Historically, most of the present-day Kuwait was part of Mesopotamia. Before the discovery of oil, Kuwait was a regional trade port. Oil reserves were discovered in commercial quantities in 1938. In 1946, crude oil was exported for the first time. From 1946 to 1982, the country underwent large-scale modernisation, largely based on income from oil production. In the 1980s, Kuwait experienced a period of geopolitical instability and an economic crisis following the stock market crash. In 1990, after oil production disputes with neighbouring Iraq, Kuwait was invaded, and later annexed by Iraq. The occupation ended in 1991 after intervention by a military coalition led by the US and various other countries.

Like some other Arab states in the Persian Gulf, Kuwait is an emirate. The emir is the head of the state and the Al Sabah is the ruling family. Kuwait is a developing country with a high income economy, backed by the world's sixth largest oil reserves. Kuwait popular culture is exported to neighbouring GCC states. Its GDP nominal is 160 billion with a per capita value of 52,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high and time is UTC+ 3. It is a member of UN, Arab League, GCC, OPEC and OIC.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz Republic (Demonym: Kyrgyz) with Capital: Bishkek has Population: 7 million in Area: 198,500. Its Languages are Kyrgyz and Russian and Religion: Muslim 90%, Christian 7. Its Currency is Kyrgyzstani Som.

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country in Central Asia lying in the Tian Shan and Pamir mountain ranges. It has China to the east and southeast; Tajikistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west and Kazakhstan to the north.

The capital Bishkek is also the largest city in Kyrgyzstan. Its Ethnic groups include 78 % Kyrgyz and 14 % Uzbek. There are 4 % Russians in the population. These were moved in by the Soviet Union to offset the Muslim majority. The population density in Kyrgyzstan is 27 per square kilometre.

Most of the Christian population adheres to Orthodoxy. The government is unitary presidential republic and the Legislature consists of a supreme Council.

Yenisei Kyrgyz Khanate was formed in 693. It was annexed by Russian Empire in 1876 and it became a SSR in 1918. Kyrgyzstan achieved independence in 1990.

The per capita income nominal in Kyrgyzstan is 1800 dollars. Kyrgyzstan had been the 9th poorest republic in the Soviet Union. Currently, it is the second poorest after Tajikistan in Central Asia and 22 % of its population lives below poverty line. Initially, the breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of markets. The government reforms enabled WTO membership in 1998.

During its Soviet days, 98 % Kyrgyz exports went to the other Soviet states. In early 1990s, factories and state farms collapsed due to absence of markets and Kyrgyzstan was worse off than most states except the war- torn Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. The economic performance improved due to remittances from Kyrgyz migrants to Russia who are almost a million in number.

Kyrgyzstan being mountainous, its terrain accommodates livestock raising as the largest agricultural activity. The resulting wool, meat and dairy products are major commodities. In agriculture field, wheat, sugar beets and cotton are main crops.

Kyrgyzstan has negligible petroleum and gas reserves but is rich in natural deposits including coal, gold and uranium. Metallurgy is an important industry in the country. Foreign investment comes in extraction of gold from Kantor gold mine. The plentiful water resources and mountainous terrain enable production and export of hydroelectric energy in large quantities. Its principal exports include nonferrous metals, woollen products, electricity and engineering goods. Its leading trade partners include Germany, Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

LAOS

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Demonym: Lao) with Capital: Vientiane has Population: 7.8 million in an Area: 236,800. Its Languages are Lao, French and Religion: Buddhist 66%, Christian 2%. Its Currency is kip.

Laos is the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia. At the heart of the Indochinese Peninsula, Laos is bordered by Myanmar and China to the northwest, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the southeast and Thailand to the west and southwest. Its capital and largest city is Vientiane.

In ethnicity, there are 11 % Khmu and 9 % Hmong apart from the majority Lao group. 31 % of the people follow folk religions. Its population density is 27.

Present-day Laos traces its historic and cultural identity to Lan Xang, which existed from the 13th to 18th centuries as one of the largest kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Because of its central geographical location in Southeast Asia, the kingdom was a hub of overland trade and became wealthy economically and culturally. After a period of internal conflict, Lan Xang broke into three separate kingdoms; Luang Pharabang, Vientiane and Champasak. In 1893, the three kingdoms came under a French protectorate and were united to form what is now known as Laos. It was occupied by Japan during WW2 and briefly regained independence in 1945 as a Japanese puppet state but was colonised by France until its autonomy in 1949. Laos regained independence in 1953 as the Kingdom of Laos, with a constitutional monarchy under Sisaveng Vong. A civil war began in 1959, which saw the communist Pathet Lao, supported by North Vietnam and the Soviet Union, fight against the Royal Lao Armed Forces, supported by the US. After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party came to power, ending the civil

war and the monarchy. Laos was then dependent on military and economic aid from the Soviet Union until its dissolution in 1991.

It is a one-party socialist republic, espousing Marxism-Leninism and governed by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, under which non-governmental organisations have routinely characterised the country's human rights record as poor, citing repeated abuses such as torture, restrictions on civil liberties and persecution of minorities.

The politically and culturally dominant Lao people make up 53 % of the population, mostly in the lowlands. Mon Khmer groups, the Hmong, and other hill tribes live in the foothills and mountains. Laos's strategies for development are based on generating electricity from rivers and selling the power to its neighbours, namely Thailand, China and Vietnam, as well as its initiative to become a land-linked nation, as evidenced by the construction of four new railways connecting Laos and neighbours. Laos has been referred to as one of Southeast Asia's and Pacific's fastest growing economies by the World Bank with annual GDP growth averaging 7.4 % since 2009. GDP nominal is 14 billion with a per capita value of 2000 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time UTC + 7.

Laos is a member of the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement, the ASEAN, East Asia Summit and French Community and WTO.

LATVIA

Republic of Latvia (Demonym: Latvian) with Capital: Riga has Population: 2 million in an Area of 64589. Its Languages are Latvian and Russian and Religion: Christian 64%. Its Currency is Euro.

Latvia is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. It is bordered by Estonia to the north, Russia to the east, Belarus to the southeast and Lithuania to the south. It shares maritime border with Sweden to the west. Time zone in Latvia is UTC+2.

After centuries of Teutonic, Swedish, Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian rule, which was mainly implemented through the local Baltic German aristocracy, the independent Republic of Latvia was established in 1918 after breaking away from the German Empire in the aftermath of the WW1. The country became increasingly autocratic after the coup in 1934 established the dictatorship of Karlis Ulmanis. Latvia's de facto independence was interrupted at the outset of the WW2 and it was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union. This was followed by its invasion and occupation by Nazi Germany in 1941 and the re-occupation by the Soviets in 1944, which formed the Latvian SSR for the next 45 years. As a result of extensive

immigration during the Soviet occupation, the ethnic Russians became the most prominent minority in the country. The peaceful Singing Revolution started in 1987 among the Baltic Soviet republics and ended with the restoration of both de facto and official independence in 1991. Latvia has since been a democratic unitary parliamentary republic.

Latvians belong to the ethno-linguistic group of the Balts and speak Latvian, one of the only two surviving Baltic languages. 63 % of its population is Latvian and 25 % Russian. 36 % Christians are Lutheran, 17 % Catholic and 9 % Orthodox. Its population density is 30 and GDP Nominal 47 billion with a per capita value of 25,000 dollars. Latvia is a developed country with a high income advanced economy ranking 39th in the HDI.

It is a member of the EU, Eurozone, NATO, the CoE, the UN, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the IMF, the Nordic Baltic Eight, the Nordic Investment Bank, the OECD, the OSCE and the WTO.

LEBANON

Republic of Lebanon (Demonym: Lebanese) with Capital: Beirut has Population: 6 million in Area: 10,400. Its Languages are Arabic, French and Religion: Muslim 61%, Christian 38%. Its Currency is Pound.

Lebanon is a country in the Levant Region of West Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north and east; by Israel to the south and Mediterranean Sea to the west. Cyprus lies a short distance away from its coast line. Its capital is also its largest city.

The earliest evidence of human civilisation in Lebanon dates back to 5000 BC. From 3200 to 539 BC, Lebanon was home to Phoenicia, a maritime empire that stretched to the Mediterranean Basin. In 64 BC, the Roman Empire conquered the region, and Lebanon soon became a major centre for Christianity under the aegis of the Byzantine Empire. In the 7th century, the Muslim conquest of the Levant brought the region under the control of the Rashidun Caliphate. The 11th century saw the beginning of the Crusades and the establishment of Crusader states, which later fell to the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, who in turn ceded the territory to the Ottoman Turks in the aftermath of the Ottoman-Mamluk War of 1516-17. Under Ottoman ruler Abdulmejid 1, the first Lebanese proto-state was established in the form of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate, created in the 19th century as a home for Maronite Christians under the Ottoman Tanzimat period.

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire around WW1, the five Ottoman provinces constituting modern-day Lebanon came under the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, to be administered by France. Under the Mandate administration, France established Greater Lebanon as the predecessor state to today's independent Lebanon. However, French rule over the region weakened significantly in the aftermath of the German invasion of France in 1940, during WW2. By 1943, Lebanon had gained independence from Free France and subsequently established a distinct form of confessional government, with the state's major religious groups being apportioned specific political powers. The new Lebanese state was relatively stable for a short period after independence, but this was ultimately shattered by the outbreak of large-scale fighting in the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-90, between various political and sectarian factions. Amidst the internal hostilities of this period, Lebanon was also subjugated by two overlapping military occupations by Syria from 1976 to 2005 and by Israel from 1985 to 2000. Since the end of the conflicts, there have been extensive efforts to revive the economy and rebuild national infrastructure.

Lebanon is a developing country and an upper middle income state. Corrupting and instability are its major problems. 95% of its people are Arab. Population density is 560. GDP nominal is 22 billion with a per capita income of 3300 dollars. Its HDI is high and time UTC+ 2. It is a member of the UN, NAM, OIC, French Community, Arab League and G77.

LESOTHO

Kingdom of Lesotho (Demonym: Mosotho) with Capital: Maseru has a Population: 2.5 million in Area: 30355. Its Languages are English, Sesotho and Religion: Christian 92%. Its Currency is Loti.

Lesotho is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It is an enclave of South Africa, with which it shares a border of 1100 kilometres. It is the only sovereign enclave in the world outside of the Italian Peninsula. It is situated in the Maloto Mountains and contains the highest peak in Southern Africa. The capital Maseru is also the largest city in Lesotho.

The singular Demonym is Mosotho and its plural is Basotho. The ethnic group Basotho is also called Sotho. The country derives its name from this group. It comprises 99.7 % of the population. The government is unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy and the current monarch is Letsie 3.

Lesotho gained independence in 1966. Its population density is 68. Its time is UTC + 2 and its driving to the left.

Lesotho was formed in 1822 by King Moshoeshoe 1. Continuous encroachments by Dutch settlers made the king enter into an agreement with the British Empire to become a protectorate in 1868. In 1884 it became a crown colony of the British. In 1966, it gained independence and was ruled by the Basotho National Party for two decades. Constitutional government was restored in 1993 after seven years of military rule. The King was exiled in 1990 but he returned in 1992.

Lesotho is a lower middle income country with significant socioeconomic challenges. Almost half the population lives below poverty line and HIV/AIDS rate is the second highest in the world. Its 81 % literacy rate is among the highest in Africa. Its economy is based on agriculture, livestock, manufacturing and mining. Lesotho depends on remittances from workers abroad and receipts from the Southern African Customs Union. The majority of households subsist on farming. The formal sector employs female workers in the apparel sector. Male migrant labour is employed in mining. The western lowlands form the main agriculture zone. Crops and animal raising bring two thirds of the national income. Its GDP nominal per capita is 1100 dollars.

Lesotho has taken advantage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act to become the largest exporter of garments to the US from the Sub Saharan Africa. Water and diamonds are Lesotho's natural resources. The water is stored and sold to South Africa. 240,000 carats of diamonds, worth 300 million dollars are produced per annum in Lesotho.

Lesotho is a member of the UN, NAM, the Commonwealth of Nations, the African Union, and the Southern African Development Community.

LIBERIA

Republic of Liberia (Demonym: Liberian) with Capital: Monrovia has Population: 5 million in Area: 111370. Its Languages are English, Local languages and Religion: Christian 86%, Muslim 12%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Liberia is on West African coast. It has Sierra Leone to the North West; Guinea to the north; Ivory Coast to the east and Atlantic Ocean to the south and southwest.

Liberia began as a settlement of the American Colonisation Society (ACS) in 1822. The society believed that the black people would have better freedom and prosperity in Africa than in the US. Monroe, the 5th US President allowed the slaves to return to Africa. The members chose a country in the Gulf of Guinea and named it Liberia. Out of respect for the US President, they named the capital as Monrovia. Liberia became the first African country to proclaim independence in 1847. It was the first

modern republic in Africa. In 1848, Joseph Roberts became the first president. The US did not recognise this independence till 1862 during the American Civil War.

Kpelle and Basa are its main ethnic groups. Its population density is 92 and GDP nominal per capita 800 dollars. Its HDI is low and time is UTC.

LIBYA

State of Libya (Demonym: Libyan0 with Capital: Tripoli has Population: 7.3 million in Area 1,759541. Its Languages are Arabic, Italian and Religion: Muslim 97%, Christian 3%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Libya is a country in Maghreb region of North Africa. It is bordered by Mediterranean Sea to the north; Egypt to the east; Sudan to the southeast; Chad to the south; Niger to the southwest, Algeria to the west and Tunisia to the northwest.

Libya is the 4th largest country in the Arab World and Africa, and 16th largest in the world. It is smaller in area than Algeria in its west but is much bigger than Egypt to its east. Libyan coastline extends well into the Mediterranean. Libya comprises three historical regions; Tripolitania, Fezzan, and Cyrenaica. Its capital is also its largest city. 92 % of its population is Arab and 5 % Berber. 97 % are Sunni Muslims and population density is 4.

Libya has been inhabited by Berbers since the late Bronze Age as descendants from Iberomaurusian and Caspian cultures. In classical antiquity, the Phoenicians established city states and trading posts in western Libya, while several Greek cities were established in the East. Parts of Libya were variously ruled by Carthaginians, Persians and Greeks before the entire region becoming a part of the Roman Empire. Libya was an early centre of Christianity. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the area of Libya was mostly occupied by the Vandals until the 7th century when invasions brought Islam to the region. From then on, centuries of Arab migration to the Maghreb shifted the demographic landscape of Libya in favour of Arabs. In the 16th century, the Spanish Empire and the Knights of St John occupied Tripoli until Ottoman rule began in 1551. Libya was involved in the Barbary Wars of the 18th and 19th centuries. Ottoman rule continued until the Italo-Turkish War, which resulted in the Italian occupation of Libya and the establishment of two colonies, Italian Tripolitania and Italian Cyrenaica in 1911-1934 periods. They were later unified in the Italian Libya colony from 1934 to 1943.

During the WW2, Libya was an area of warfare in the North African Campaign. The Italian population then went into decline. Libya became independent as a Kingdom in 1951. A bloodless military coup in 1969, initiated by a coalition led by Colonel

Muammar Gaddafi, overthrew King Idris 1 and created a republic. Gaddafi was often described by critics as a dictator, and was one of the longest serving leaders. He ruled for 42 years until being overthrown and killed during the 2011 Libyan Civil War, which was part of the wider Arab Spring. Authority was transferred to the National Transition Council and then to the elected General National Congress. By 2014, two rival authorities claimed to govern Libya, which led to a second civil war, with parts of Libya split between the Tobruk and Tripoli-based governments as well as various tribal and Islamist militias. The two main warring sides signed a permanent ceasefire in 2020, and a unity government took authority to plan for democratic elections, though political rivalries continue to delay this. Libya is a developing country ranking 104th by HDI. It has the 10th largest proven oil reserves in the world. GDP nominal is 46 billion dollars with a per capita value of 700 dollars. HDI is high and time is UTC + 2. It is a member of the UN, NAM, AU, the Arab League, OIC and OPEC.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Principality of Liechtenstein (Demonym: Liechtensteiner) with Capital: Vaduz has Population: 35000 in Area: 160. Its Languages are German, local dialects and Religion: Christian 83%, Muslim 6%. Its Currency is Swiss Franc.

Liechtenstein is a German speaking microstate in Alpine Central Europe; it is between Switzerland to the west and south; and Austria to the east and north. Liechtenstein is the 6th smallest country in the world; 4th smallest in Europe and the smallest country to border two countries. It is a semi-constitutional monarchy headed by the Prince of Liechtenstein. 73 % of its Christians are Catholic. Its time is UTC + 1. Union between Vaduz and Schulenburg took place in 1719. Treaty of Pressburg was signed in 1806 and separation from Germany achieved in 1866.

Its population density is 237 and GDP nominal 7 billion dollars with a per capita value of 180,000 dollars, ranking among the top in the world. It has a strong financial sector centred in Vaduz. It was once known as a billionaire tax haven, but is no longer on official blacklists of uncooperative tax haven countries. An Alpine country, Liechtenstein is mountainous and a winter sport destination.

It is a member of UN, EFTA and the Council of Europe. It is not a member state of the EU, but it participates in both the Schengen Area and the European Economic Area. It has a customs union and a monetary union with Switzerland.

LITHUANIA

Republic of Lithuania (Demonym: Lithuanian) with Capital: Vilnius has Population: 3 million in Area: 65300. Its Languages are Lithuanian, Russian and Religion: Christian 80%. Its Currency is Litas.

Lithuania is in Baltic region of Europe on the southeastern shore of the Baltic Sea. It is bordered by Latvia to the north; Belarus to the east and the south; Poland to the south and a Russian exclave Kaliningrad Oblast to the southwest. Sweden and Denmark lie to its west but do not share land boundaries with it. However, Sweden does share maritime borders with Lithuania. Its capital is also its largest city.

Called Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are predominantly Catholic Christian by religion. They broke away from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Germany assumed the role of their protector due to the common faith.

84% of population of the country is Lithuanian, 6% Polish and 5% Russian. 75% Christians are Catholic. Its population density is 44.

For millennia, the southeastern shores of the Baltic Sea were inhabited by various Baltic tribes. In the 1230s, Lithuanian lands were united for the first time by Mindaugas, who formed the Kingdom of Lithuania in 1253. Subsequent expansion and consolidation resulted in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which by the 14th century was the largest country in Europe. In 1386, the Grand Duchy entered into a de facto personal union with the crown of the Kingdom of Poland. The two realms were united into the bi-non-federal Polish Lithuanian commonwealth in 1569, forming one of the largest and most prosperous states in Europe. The Commonwealth lasted more than two centuries, until neighbouring countries gradually dismantled it between 1772 and 1795, with the Russian empire annexing most of the Lithuania's territory. Towards the end of WW1, Lithuania declared independence in 1918, founding the modern republic of Lithuania. In WW2, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union, then by Nazi Germany, before being reoccupied by the Soviets in 1944. Lithuanian armed resistance to the Soviet occupation lasted until the early 1950s. In March 1990, a year before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to breakaway when it proclaimed the restoration of its independence.

Lithuania is a developed country with a high income, advanced economy, ranking 35th in the HDI. Its GDP nominal is 85 billion with a per capita value of 31,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.875, very high and time is UTC+2.

It is a member of the EU, the CoE, the Eurozone, the Nordic Investment Bank, the Schengen Agreement, NATO, and OECD. It also participates in the Nordic Baltic Eight (NB8) regional cooperation format. It also participates in the Nordic Baltic Eight (NB8) regional cooperation format.

LUXEMBOURG

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (Demonym: Luxembourger with Capital: Luxembourg has Population: 660,000 in Area: 2586. Its Languages are French, German and Religion: Christian 73%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Euro.

Luxembourg is a small landlocked country in Western Europe. It is bordered by Belgium to the west and north, Germany to the east and France to the south. The capital is also the largest city.

Luxembourg City is one of the four institutional seats of the EU. The other three are Brussels in Belgium, Frankfurt in Germany and Strasbourg in France. It houses several EU institutions including its Court of Justice. Luxembourgish culture, people, and languages are highly intertwined with its French and German neighbours, while Luxembourgish is the only national language of the Luxembourgish people and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. French is the only language for legislation, and all three – Luxembourgish, French and German – are used for administrative matters in the country.

53% of its population is Luxembourger, 15 % Portuguese, 8 % French and 4 % Italian. 64 % Christians are Catholic. Its population density is 255

Luxembourg is Europe's 7th smallest country. It is one of the least populated countries but has the highest population growth in Europe. Foreigners account for nearly half the population. It is a representative democracy headed by a constitutional monarch, making it the world's only remaining grand duchy.

It is a developed country with an advanced economy and GDP nominal 90 billion dollars with a per capita value of 135,000 dollars. This represents the top position in the world. HDI is 0.930, very high and time is UTC + 1.

The historic city including its fortifications was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994 due to the exceptional preservation of its vast fortifications and historic quarters. Luxembourg is a founding member of the UN, EU, OECD, NATO, and Benelux. It served on the UNSC for the first time in 2013 and 2014.

MADAGASCAR

Republic of Madagascar (Demonym: Malagasy) with Capital: Antananarivo has a Population of 29 million in an Area of 592,796. Its Languages are Malagasy and French and Religion: Christian 85%, Muslim 3%. Its Currency is Franc.

Madagascar is an island country comprising the island of Madagascar and numerous smaller peripheral islands. It is situated in the West Indian Ocean, east of Mozambique. It is roughly 400 kilometres off the coast of South East Africa. Its time is UTC +3.

The island of Madagascar is the 4th largest in the world and it is the second largest island nation in the world. Following the prehistoric breakup of the supercontinent Gondwana, Madagascar split from Africa during the early Jurassic, around 180 million years ago, and split from the Indian subcontinent around 90 million years ago, allowing native plants and animals to evolve in relative isolation. Consequently, it is a biodiversity hotspot and one of the world's 17 mega diverse countries, with 90 % of wildlife being endemic. The island has a subtropical to tropical maritime climate.

Madagascar was first settled around the mid-first millennium AD by Austronesian peoples, presumably arriving on outrigger canoes from the present-day Indonesia. These were joined around the ninth century by the Bantu migrants crossing the Mozambique Channel from East Africa. Other groups continued to settle on Madagascar over time, each one making lasting contributions to Malagasy cultural life. Consequently, there are 18 or more classified peoples of Madagascar, the most numerous being the Merina of the central highlands. They constitute 26 % of its population. Among other groups Betsimisaraka represent 15% population and Betsileo 12 %. 46 % Christians are Protestant and 38 % Catholic. Its population density is 48.

Until the late 18th century, the island was ruled by a fragmented assortment of shifting socio-political alliances. Beginning in the early 19th century, most of it was united and ruled as the Kingdom of Madagascar by a series of Merina nobles. In 1897, the French ended the monarchy and annexed the territory. Madagascar gained independence in 1960. The country has since undergone four major constitutional periods, termed republics, and has been governed as a constitutional democracy since 1992. Following a political crisis and military coup in 2009, Madagascar underwent a protracted transition towards its fourth republic, with constitutional governance being restored in 2014. Malagasy and French are both official languages of the state.

It is classified as a least developed country. Ecotourism and agriculture, paired with greater investment in education, health and private enterprise, are key elements of its development strategy. Despite substantial economic growth since the early 2000s, income disparities have widened, and quality of life remains low for the majority of the population. Its GDP nominal is 16 billion dollars with a per capita value of 530

dollars and its HDI is low. Madagascar is a member of the UN, AU, SADC and La Francophonie.

MALAWI

Republic of Malawi (Demonym: Malawian) with Capital: Lilongwe has Population: 21 million in an Area of 118,484. Its Languages are English and Chewa and Religion: Christian 82%, Muslim 14%. Its Currency is Kwacha.

Malawi is a landlocked country in Southeastern Africa. It lies in the west of Lake Malawi and borders Zambia to the northwest; Tanzania to the north and northeast, and Mozambique to the east, south and west. It is separated from its neighbours Tanzania and Mozambique by Lake Malawi and is nicknamed The Warm Heart of Africa. It is dependent on Mozambique and Tanzania for access to sea. Its capital is also its largest city. Its time is UTC + 2.

The part of Africa known as Malawi was settled around the 10th century by migrating Bantu groups. In 1891, it was colonised by the British as the British Central African Protectorate, and was named as Nyasaland in 1907. In 1953, it became a protectorate within the semi-independent Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Federation was dissolved in 1963. In 1964, the protectorate was ended. Nyasaland became an independent country as the Commonwealth Realm under Prime Minister Hastings Banda, and was renamed Malawi. Banda became a president two years later and remained in power till 1994. Today, Malawi is a multiparty presidential republic and power is transferred peacefully. Its foreign policy is pro-Western. Its ethnic groups include 25 % Chewa, 20 % Tumbuka, 18 % Lomwe and 15 % Yao. 60 % of the Christian are Protestant. Its population density is 153.

It is one of the least developed countries. Its GDP nominal is 38 billion dollars with a per capita value of 580 dollars. Its HDI is low. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, and it has a largely rural and rapidly growing population. The government depends on foreign aid which has diminished since 2000. There are challenges in expanding the economy; improving education and healthcare, and protecting environments. There is widespread unemployment, low life expectancy, high infant mortality, and HIV/AIDS. There were conflicts based on ethnic divisions but they subsided by 2008. The idea of identifying with Malawian identity has re-emerged.

It is a member of the UN, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the AU.

MALAYSIA

Malaysia (Demonym: Malaysian) with Capital: Kuala Lumpur has a Population of 33 million in an Area of 329847. Its Languages are Malay and English and Religion: Muslim 64%, Buddhist 19%. Its Currency is Ringgit.

Malaysia is in South East Asia. It has two similar sized regions separated by South China Sea, Peninsular Malaysia and Eastern Malaysia. Peninsular Malaysia borders Thailand to the north. It shares maritime border with Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia. Eastern Malaysia shares land and maritime borders with Brunei and Indonesia. It also has maritime border with the Philippines and Vietnam. Its time is UTC + 8 and driving is to the left.

Kuala Lumpur is the national capital, the country's largest city and the seat of the legislative. Putrajaya is the administrative centre, which represents the seat of both the Executive branch and the judicial branch of the government.

The country has its origins in the Malay Kingdom, which, from the 18th century on became subject to the British Empire, along with the British Straits Settlements protectorate. During World War Two, British Malaya, along with other nearby British and American colonies, was occupied by the Empire of Japan. Following three years of occupation, Peninsular Malaysia was unified as the Malaysian Union in 1946 and then restructured as the Federation of Malaya in 1948. The country achieved independence in 1957. In 1963, independent Malaya united with the then British crown colonies of North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore to become Malaysia. Expelled from the federation in 1965, Singapore became an independent country.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country and its politics is tailored to this composition. Its ethnic groups include 70 % Bumiputra including 57 % Malay and 13 % indigenous groups of Sabah, Sarawak and Orang Asli. 23 % population is Chinese and 7 % Indian. Apart from Muslims and Buddhists, there are 9 % Christians and 6 % Hindus. The population density in the country is 100 per square kilometre. Its official language is Malaysian Malay, a standard form of the Malay language while English remains an active second language. Islam is the official religion but the constitution grants freedom of religion to non-Muslims. The head of the state is an elected monarch, chosen from among the nine state sultans every five years and the head of government is the prime minister.

After independence, the gross domestic product grew at an average of 7 % per year in the country for almost 50 years and currently stands at 13,000 dollars per capita

nominal. The economy has traditionally been driven by natural resources, but is expanding into commerce and tourism, especially medical tourism. The country has a newly industrialised market economy, ranked 36th largest in the world and 5th largest in Southeast Asia. The large service sector contributes 53 % to the GDP, industrial sector 38 % and the small agriculture sector 9 %. The unemployment rate is 4 %. The foreign exchange reserves are the 24th largest and automotive industry the 22nd largest by production in the world.

Malaysia is the 23rd largest exporter and 25th largest importer in the world. However economic inequalities exist between different ethnic groups. The Chinese make up about one quarter of the population but account for 70 % of the market capitalisation. Chinese businesses in Malaysia are a part of the larger bamboo network, a network of overseas Chinese businesses in the Southeast Asian market sharing common family and cultural ties.

International trade, facilitated by the shipping route in the adjacent Strait of Malacca, and manufacturing are the key sectors. Malaysia is an exporter of natural and agricultural resources. Petroleum is a major export. Malaysia has once been the largest producer of tin, rubber and palm oil in the world. It still remains the largest producer of palm oil. Manufacturing has a large influence in the economy although the economic structure has been moving away from it.

Tourism is the third largest contributor to the GDP after manufacturing and commodities sectors. It contributes 20 % to the GDP. Malaysia is the 14th most visited country in the world and it earns 20 billion dollars per annum from tourism.

The country has developed into a centre of Islamic banking, and has the highest numbers of female workers in that industry. Knowledge based services are also expanding in the country. Exports of high technology products amount to 92 billion dollars per annum, the second highest in ASEAN, after Singapore.

The country is a founding member of the OIC, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN. It is a member of the APEC, NAM and the Commonwealth. Malaysia is important for its location next to Malacca Strait and South China Sea. Its neighbours Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and Philippines are the other important aspects of Malaysia.

MALDIVES

Republic of the Maldives (Demonym: Maldivian) with Capital: Male has a Population: of 500,000 in an Area of 300. Its Languages are Dhivehi and English and Religion: Muslim 98%. Its Currency is Rufiyaa.

Maldives is a small island nation in South Asia located in the Indian Ocean. It is southwest of Sri Lanka and India, 750 kilometres from the Asian Continent. It is a chain of 26 atolls stretching north and south of the Equator.

Maldives is one of the world's most geographically dispersed sovereign states. Also, it is the smallest Asian country by land area and second smallest in population. It is also the least populous Muslim majority nation in the world.

It comprises a territory spanning roughly 90,000 square kilometres including the sea. Male is its capital and the largest city, traditionally called the King's Island, where the ancient royal dynasties ruled from its central location. Its population density is 1800 per square kilometre. The Maldivian Archipelago is located on the Vhagos Laccadive Ridge, a vast submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean. With the average ground level elevation of 4 feet and the highest elevation 8 feet, Maldives is the lowest lying country in the world.

The Maldives has been inhabited for over 2500 years. In the 12th century, Islam reached in the Archipelago, which was consolidated as a sultanate, developing strong commercial and cultural ties with Asia and Africa. From the mid-16th century, the region came under the increasing influence of European colonial powers. It became a British protectorate in 1887. Independence was achieved in 1965. The ensuing decades have seen political instability and challenges posed by climate change and rising sea levels.

The economy is upper middle class. Fishing has been the dominant economic activity, and remains the largest sector by far, followed by the rapidly growing tourism industry. Historically, the Maldives provided enormous quantities of cowry shells, an international currency of the early ages. From the second century CE, the islands were known as the Money Isles by the Arabs. Monetaria Moneta was used for centuries as a currency in Africa, and huge amounts of Maldivian cowries were introduced into Africa by the western nations during the period of the slave trade. The cowry is now the symbol of the Maldives Monetary Authority.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 2000 dollars. In 1970s, Maldives was among the 20 poorest countries. The economy at the time was largely dependent on fisheries and trading local goods such as coir rope, ambergris and coco de mer with neighbouring countries and East Asian countries. The government reforms of 1980s lifted import quotas and provided more opportunities to the private sector. This played a significant role in development. Tourism also grew from its infant stage. Agriculture and manufacturing continue to play lesser roles in the economy, constrained by the limited availability of cultivable land and the shortage of domestic labour. Maldives is a founding member of the SAARC. It is also member of the UN, the Commonwealth, the OIC and the NAM.

MALI

Republic of Mali (Demony: Malian) with Capital: Bamako has a Population of 20 million in an Area of 1,240000. Its Languages are French and Bambara and Religion: Muslim 92% Christian 3%. Its Currency is West African CFA Franc.

Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa lying between latitudes 10N and 25N, and longitudes 13W and 5E. It thus falls in the **UTC** time zone itself. Its territory extends to north and reaches deep into middle of the Sahara Desert. It borders Algeria to the west and northwest; Niger to the east; Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast to the south; Guinea to the southwest, and Senegal and Mauritania, to the west.

Mali has been a part of three West African empires that controlled Trans- Sahara trade. During its golden age, there was a flourishing of mathematics, astronomy, literature and art. At its peak, the Mali Empire was twice the size of the present day France and stretched to the western coast of Africa.

France seized its control in the 18th century. It thus became a part of French Sudan known as Sudanese Republic. It joined Senegal in 1959 and achieved independence in 1960 as the Mali Federation. Senegal withdrew shortly after.

It is the 8th largest country by area in Africa and 24th largest in the world. In area, it is comparable with Angola and South Africa. In population, it is 67th. It is thinly populated with population density of 12 which is 215th in world ranking. 67% Malian population is under 25. Majority of the inhabitants live in south which features the Niger and Senegal Rivers.

Its narrow width in the centre is critical. The major ethnic groups are Mandi 50%, Fula 16%, Voltaic 13% and Tuareg 10%. Tuareg are Moors of the northern desert region. In 2012, an armed conflict broke out in northern Mali over demands for Azawad as an independent state. Al Qaida was also involved. The conflict was complicated by a military coup. Fighting began between Tuareg and other rebel factions. In response to territorial gains, French military launched Operation Serval in January 2013. A month later Malian and French forces recaptured most of the north. Presidential elections were held in July 2013.

Malian economy is centred on agriculture and mining. Natural resources include gold. Mali is the 3rd largest gold producer in Africa after South Africa and Ghana. It also produces salt. Its purchasing power parity and nominal per capita GDP figures are 2271 and 891 dollars respectively.

MALTA

Republic of Malta (Demonym: Maltese) with Capital: Valletta has a Population of 520,000 in an Area of 316. Its Languages are Maltese and English and Religion: Christian 89%, Muslim 4. Its Currency is Euro.

Malta is a southern European island nation, consisting of an archipelago in the Mediterranean Sea. It lies 80 kilometres south of Sicily, 300 kilometres east of Tunisia and 330 kilometres north of Libya.

Malta is the 10th smallest and 5th most densely populated country in the world. Its location in the centre of Mediterranean region between Crete, Sicily, Tunisia and Algeria renders it strategically important. Its ethnic groups include 80 % Maltese and 22 % others. 82 % Christians are Catholic. There are also 1 % Hindus. It joined the EU in 2004. Its population density is 1700 per square kilometre and per capita GDP nominal 40,000 dollars.

Malta is referred to as a city state and Valletta is the smallest national capital in Europe. Malta has been inhabited since 6000 BC. Its location in the centre of the Mediterranean has historically given it great importance as a naval base, with a succession of powers having contested and ruled the islands. These include the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Aragonese, Knights of St John, French and British.

While Christianity has been present since the time of early Christians, Malta was predominantly a Muslim country under Arab rule in the Middle Ages. The Muslim rule ended with the Norman invasion of Malta by Roger 1 in 1091. Malta became a British colony in 1813, serving as the headquarters for the British Mediterranean Fleet. It was besieged by the Axis powers during World War 2 and was an important Allied base for operations in North Africa and the Mediterranean. The British parliament passed the Malta Independence Act in 1964 with British monarch as its head. The country became an independent republic in 1974. It has been a member of the Commonwealth of Nations since independence.

Historically and culturally, Malta is closely tied with Italy and specifically Sicily. 65 % Maltese Population speaks Italian which was one of the official languages of Malta until 1934.

Its economy is heavily reliant on tourism. Malta is classified as an advanced economy according to the IMF. Its major resources are limestone, a favourable geographical location and a productive labour force. Food production is limited and so is fresh water. There are no domestic energy resources. The economy is

dependent on foreign trade, manufacturing and tourism. Malta serves as a freight trans-shipment point. Electronics and textiles are manufactured and film production has also contributed to the Maltese economy.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Republic of the Marshall Islands (Demonym: Marshallese) with Capital: Majuro has a Population: 65000 in an Area: 181. Its Languages are English, Marshallese and Religion: Christian 98%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Marshall Islands lie in the Pacific Ocean, between Fiji and Hawaii, east of Philippines. The country is slightly west of the International Date Line and just north of the Equator. Marshall Islands have 98 % water, more than any other nation in territory. The islands share maritime boundaries with Wake Island to the north; Kiribati to the southeast, Nauru to the south and the Federated States of Micronesia to the west.

Geographically, the country is part of the larger island group of Micronesia. It is spread over five islands and 29 coral atolls, comprising 1156 individual islands and islets (A coral is a hard stony substance secreted by certain marine coelenterates as an external skeleton, typically forming large reefs in warm waters. It is a sedentary coelenterate of warm and tropical seas, with a calcareous horny or soft skeleton. Most corals are colonial and many rely on the presence of green algae in their tissues to obtain energy from sunlight).

Its capital is also its largest city. 55 % of its population lives on Majuro. The population density of the country is 250 per square kilometre Marshelles make up 92 % of the total population. 98 % people are Christian.

Austronesians had been living in the islands since the second millennium BC. Spanish explorers sighted them in 1526 and made a landfall. British Captain John Marshall and Thomas Gilbert landed on the islands in 1788 and the islands were named after Captain Marshall. Germany annexed the territory in 1885 and Japan in 1914. During World War 2, in 1944, the US took control of the islands.

Nuclear testing in the islands was conducted in 1946 and concluded in 1958. Independence was achieved in 1979. Compact of Free Association was established in 1986 on the pattern of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Its per capita GDP is 4000 dollars and its currency is US dollar. There are few natural resources in the country and its imports far exceed exports. Agricultural products include coconut, melons, pigs and chicken. Industry is based on production of copra and craft items, tuna processing and tourism. Trade with Taiwan is

significant. The country plays an important role in the international shipping industry as a flag of convenience for commercial vessels. It is managed through a joint venture with International Registries Inc., a US based corporation that has offices in major shipping centres. As of 2017, the Marshalllese ship registry was the second largest in the world after Panama Registry. Unlike most flag countries, there is no requirement that a Marshalllese flag vessel be owned by only the national individual or corporation. As a result of the registry, Marshall Islands have been the largest importers of crude oil from the US. This is despite the fact that the islands have no oil refining capacity. US assistance is mainstay of its economy.

MAURITANIA

Islamic Republic of Mauritania (Demonym: Mauritanian) with Capital: Nouakchott has a Population: 4.5 million in an Area: 1030700. Its Languages are Arabic, Pulaar and Religion: Muslim 99%. Its Currency is Ouguiya.

It is in North West Africa on Atlantic shore. It has the territory of Western Sahara to the north; Algeria to the northeast; Mali to the northeast, east and southeast; and Senegal to the south. By land area, Mauritania is the 11th largest country in Africa and 28th largest in the world. 90 % of its territory is situated in the Sahara. Most of the population lives in the temperate south of the country, with roughly one third concentrated in the capital and the largest city, Nouakchott, a port city located on the Atlantic Coast. Population density in Mauritania is 3.5 per square kilometre.

The country's name originates from the ancient Berber Kingdom of Mauretania located in North Africa within the ancient Maghreb. Berbers occupied what is now Mauritania beginning in the third century AD. Arabs under the Umayyad Caliphate conquered the area in in the late 7th century, bringing Islam, Arab culture, and the Arabic language.

In the early 20th century, Mauritania was colonised by France as part of French West Africa. It achieved independence in 1960, but has since experienced recurrent coups and periods of military dictatorship. Mauritania is culturally and politically part of the Arab world. It is a member of the Arab League and Arabic is its official language. It has a multi-ethnic society and white moors make up 30 % of the population. Haitian or black moor population is 40 % of the total and the remaining 30 % population includes various sub-Saharan ethnic groups. Soninke and Wolof too are recognised national languages. Sunni Islam is the official religion of the country.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 2500 dollars. Despite an abundance of natural resources, including iron ore and petroleum, Mauritania remains poor. Its economy is

based primarily on agriculture, livestock and fishing. Slavery is still practiced in Mauritania and almost 15 % population is in bondage despite slavery having been officially abolished in 1981.

Iron exports are half of the total. Gold and copper mining companies are opening mines in the interior. Mauritania to Barbados in the Caribbean is relatively short distance between Africa and America.

MAURITIUS

Republic of Mauritius (Demonym: Mauritian) with Capital: Port Louis has a Population: 1.3 million in an Area: 2040. Its Languages are Creole and French and Religion: Hindu 49 %, Christian 33 %. Its Currency is Rupee.

It is an island nation in the Indian Ocean about 2000 kilometres off the southeastern coast of East Africa, east of Madagascar. It includes the main island of Mauritius, as well as Rodrigues, Agalaga, and St Brandon. The islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, along with nearby Reunion, are part of the Mascarene Islands. Reunion is an overseas territory of France. The main island of Mauritius, where population is concentrated, hosts the capital and largest city, Port Louis. The country spans an area of 2040 square kilometres and has an exclusive economic zone covering 2,300,000 square kilometres.

The capital Port Louis is situated at 20S58E position. In Mauritius, there is no official language. English is the de jure language and French is the de facto language. Mauritian Creole is the lingua franca. 90 % population speaks Creole, 5 % Bhojpuri, 4 % French and 1 % English. 67 % population has Indian origin, 28 % Creole, 3 % Chinese and 2 % French. 18 % population adheres to Islam.

Mauritius is a unitary parliamentary republic. It gained independence from Britain in 1968. The population density of Mauritius is 620 per square kilometre. It is believed that Arab sailors first discovered the uninhabited island around 975, naming it Dina Arobi. In 1507, Portuguese sailors visited the island with the island appearing with Portuguese names Cirne or Do Cerne on early Portuguese maps. A Dutch fleet, under the command of Admiral Van Warwyck, landed at what is now the Grand Port District and took possession of the island in 1598, renaming the territory after Maurice, the Prince of Orange.

A succession of short lived Dutch attempts at permanent settlement took place over a century with the aim of exploiting the local ebony forests, establishing a consistent sugar and arrack production using cane plant cuttings imported from Java along with over three hundred Malagasy slaves, before abandoning their efforts. France took

control in 1715, renaming the island Isle de France. In 1810, the United Kingdom seized the island, and 4 years later, under the Treaty of Paris, France ceded Mauritius and its dependencies to the UK. The British colony of Mauritius included Rodrigues, Agalega, St Brandon, the Chagos Archipelago and until 1906, the Seychelles. Mauritius and France dispute sovereignty over the island of Tromelin as the treaty failed to mention it specifically. Mauritius remained a British colony based on sugar plantation until its independence in 1968.

In 1965, the UK split off the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritian territory to create the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The local population was forcibly expelled and the largest island Diego Garcia was leased to the United States. Ruling on the sovereignty dispute between Mauritius and the UK, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea has ordered the return of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

Owing to its geographical location and centuries of colonisation, the people of Mauritius are highly diverse in ethnicity, culture, language and faith. It is the only country in Africa where Hinduism is the most practiced religion. Indo-Mauritians make up the bulk of the population with significant Creole, Sino Mauritian and Franco Mauritian minorities.

The government is modelled on the Westminster parliamentary system and Mauritius is highly ranked for economic and political freedom being the only African country with full democracy. It has a high income economy and is a welfare state. The government provides free universal healthcare, free education up to tertiary level and free public transportation for students, senior citizens and the disabled.

Since independence from Britain, Mauritius has developed from a low income agricultural economy to a high income economy based on tourism, textiles, sugar and financial services. The economic history of Mauritius has been called the Mauritian Miracle and the Success of Africa.

In recent years, information and communication technology, seafood, hospitality and property development, healthcare, renewable energy, and education have emerged as important sectors, attracting substantial local and foreign investment.

Biomass, hydro, solar and wind energy are its renewable and local energy sources. Mauritius has one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world, and in 2012 the government announced its intention to develop the marine economy. Its GDP nominal per capita of 12,000 dollars is the second highest in Africa. Its challenges are heavy reliance on few industry sectors, high brain drain, scarcity of skilled labour, ageing population, and, inefficient public companies and parastatal bodies.

MEXICO

United Mexican States (Demonym: Mexican) with Capital Mexico City has a Population of 131 million in an Area of 1,972,550. Its Languages are Spanish and some Mayan dialects and Religion: Christian 96. Its Currency is Peso.

It is in the southern portion of North America. It is bordered by the USA to the north; the Caribbean Sea, Belize and Guatemala to the south and the Pacific Ocean to the south and west.

Mexico is the 13th largest country by area and 10th most populous country in the world. It is organised as a federal republic comprising 31 states and the capital Mexico City. Mexico City is the second most populous city in the world following Tokyo in Japan. It is located at 19N100W position. The population density in the country is 61. It is a country with the maximum Spanish speakers in the world. 56 % of its population is Roman Catholic, 10 % Protestant and 1 % Muslim.

Human presence in the pre-Columbian Mexico goes back to 8,000 BCE. It became one of the world's six cradles of civilisation. The Mesoamerican region was home to many intertwined civilisations, including the Olmec, Zapotec, Teotihuacan, and Purepecha. The Aztecs dominated the region in the century before European contact. In 1521, the Spanish Empire and its indigenous allies conquered the Aztec Empire from its capital Tenochtitlan, the present Mexico City, establishing the colony of New Spain. Over the next three centuries, Spain and the Catholic Church expanded the territory, enforced Christianity and spread the Spanish language. With the discovery of rich deposits of silver in Zacatecas and Guanajuato, New Spain became one of the most important mining centres worldwide. The colonial order came to an end in the early 19th century with the Mexican War of independence started in 1810. It declared independence in 1821 which was recognised in 1836.

Mexico's early history as an independent state was marked by political and socioeconomic upheaval, both domestically and in foreign affairs. The US invaded as a consequence of the Texas Revolt by American settlers, which led to the Mexican American War and huge territorial losses in 1848. Mexico played an important role for the Allied war effort during World War 2.

Mexico is a regional and middle power. It has the 15th largest economy in the world and the US is its largest economic partner. Its GDP nominal per capita is 14,000 dollars. It is also the 6th most visited country in the world by tourists. It ranks poorly on the Global Peace Index due in large part to on-going conflict between drug trafficking syndicates. The drug war has led to 120,000 deaths since 2006. Services contribute 63 % to the economy, Industry 33 % and agriculture 4 %. Mexican industry includes automotive, oil and electronics and services include financial services and tourism.

Mexico is a member of the UN, the G20, the OECD, the WTO, the APEC, the OAS, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the Organisation of Ibero American States.

MICRONESIA

Federated States of Micronesia (Demonym: Micronesian) with Capital: Palikir has a Population of 100,000 in an Area of 702. Its Languages are English and Trukese and Religion: Christian 95. Its Currency is Dollar.

Micronesia is a sub-region of Oceania consisting of about 2000 islands in the north western Pacific Ocean. It has a close shared history with three other island regions. These include maritime Southeast Asia to the west, Melanesia to the south and the wider community of Austronesian people. The region has a tropical marine climate and is a part of the Oceania Realm which is one of the WWF biographical realms. It is unique in not including any continental landmass and has the smallest land area of any WWF realms.

It includes four main archipelagos; the Caroline Islands, the Gilbert Islands, the Mariana Islands and the Marshall Islands. It also includes numerous smaller islands that are not part of any archipelago (An archipelago is a group of islands).

Political control of areas within Micronesia varies, and is distributed among six sovereign states. Some of the Caroline Islands are part of the Republic of Palau while others belong to the Federated States of Micronesia. The Gilbert Islands along with the Phoenix Islands and the Line Islands in Polynesia comprise the Republic of Kiribati. Some Mariana Islands belong to the US territory of Guam and the rest to the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The island of Nauru is its own sovereign state. The Marshall Islands all belong to the Republic of Marshall Islands. Wake Island is under control of the USAF, but is also claimed by the Republic of Marshall Islands.

The notion of Micronesia has been well established since 1832. However, it does not correspond to any geomorphological, linguistic, ethnic or cultural unity. It rather represents a disparate ensemble with no real deep unity. In fact, Micronesians do not exist as a subset of the Australo-Melanesian or Melanesian people.

Human settlement of Micronesia began several millennia ago. Based on the current scientific consensus, the Austronesian people originated from a prehistoric seaborne migration, known as the Austronesian expansion, from pre-Han Formosa, between 3000 and 1500 BC. They reached the northernmost Philippines, specifically the

Batanes Islands, by around 2000 BC. They were the first to invent Ocean going sailing techniques, notably catamarans, outrigging boats, lashed lug boat and the crab claw sail. From 2000 BC they assimilated the earlier populations on the islands in their migration pathway. The earliest known contact of the Europeans with Micronesia was in 1521. This is when Magellan expedition landed in the Marianas. Jules Dumont d'Urville is usually credited with coining the term Micronesia in 1832. In fact however, Louis Domeny de Rienzi used the term a year earlier.

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) constitutes one of the most prominent features in its region. It comprises 607 islands in the western Pacific Ocean and consists of four states from west to east; Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpet and Kosrae. It has a longitudinal length of 2700 kilometres. Each of the four states is centred on one or more volcanic islands.

The FSM is 3000 kilometres north of Australia; 4000 kilometres southwest of Hawaii; northeast of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea; south of Guam and the Marianas; west of Nauru; east of Palau and the Philippines, and southeast of Japan; and west and southwest of Marshall Islands. It is marginally north of the Equator.

The Federated States of Micronesia is small in land area, but it occupies 260,000 square kilometre area of the Pacific Ocean. It has the 14th largest Economic Exploitation Zone in the world. It was formerly a part of a UN Trust Territory under the US administration by the name of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). It became independent in 1986 but it remains associated with the US. Its other TTPI neighbours too became independent as Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and Republic of Palau (ROP). It has been a member of Pacific Commission since 1983.

Its ethnic groups include Chuukese, Pohnpeian, and certain other local communities. The population is 53 % Roman Catholic and 42 % Protestant. The population density in the FSM is 158 per square kilometre.

Its per capita GDP nominal is 4000 dollars and the currency in use is the US dollar. Subsistence farming is primary to economy and fishing too is vital. Long line fishing of tuna is also viable with foreign vessels from China that have operated since 1990. There are no mineral deposits except high grade phosphate. Geographical isolation and poorly developed infrastructure hinder tourism and long term growth. Financial assistance from the US is the primary source of its revenue.

MOLDOVA

Republic of Moldova (Demonym: Moldovan) with Capital: Chisinau has a Population: 2.5 million in an Area: 33,483. Its Languages are Moldovan, Russian and Religion: Christian 97%, Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Leu.

Moldova is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe, on the northeastern corner of the Balkans. It is bordered by Romania to the west and Ukraine to the north, east and south. The unrecognised breakaway state of Transnistria lies across the Dniester River on the country's eastern border with Ukraine. The time zone in Moldova is UTC+ 2.

Moldova is a unitary parliamentary representative democratic republic. Its capital is also its largest city, and, main cultural and commercial centre in the country. The Dniester River runs through Ukraine and Moldova. It separates Transnistria from Moldova and finally discharges into the Black Sea on Ukrainian territory again.

Most of Moldovan territory was a part of the Principality of Moldova from the 14th century until 1812, when it was ceded to the Russian Empire by the Ottoman Empire to which Moldova was a vassal state and became known as Bessarabia. In 1856, southern Bessarabia was returned to Moldova, which three years later united with Wallachia to form Romania, but Russian rule was restored over the whole of the region in 1878. During the 1917 Russian Revolution, Bessarabia briefly became an autonomous state within the Russian Republic. In 1918, it declared independence and then integrated into Romania later that year following a vote of its assembly. The decision was disputed by Soviet Russia, which in 1924, established within the Ukrainian SSR, a so called Moldavian Autonomous Republic on partially Moldovan inhabited territories to the east of Bessarabia. In 1940, as a consequence of the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact, Romania was compelled to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, leading to the creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On 27th August 1991, as the dissolution of the Soviet Union was underway, the Moldavian SSR declared independence and took the name Moldova. However, the strip of Moldovan territory on the east bank of the Dniester has been under the de facto control of breakaway government of Transnistria since 1990.

Moldova has one of the lowest HDI in the world. 83 % of its population is Moldovan. The remaining groups include Ukrainians, Russians and Bulgarians. 90 % Christian are Orthodox. Its population density is 83 per square kilometre and GDP Nominal 16 billion dollars with a per capita figure of 6500 dollars. It is the second poorest country in Europe by GDP per capita after Ukraine. Much of the GDP is dominated by service sector. Moldova is a member state of the UN; the CoE; WTO; OSCE; the Guam Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development; the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Association Trio. Moldova has pursued membership of the EU, and was granted candidate status in 2022.

MONACO

Principality of Monaco (Demonym: Monacan) with Capital: Monaco has a Population: 39000 in an Area: 2. Its Languages are French, Italian and Religion: Christian 86%. Its Currency is Euro.

Monaco is a micro city state in Western Europe. It is on the French Riviera, the Mediterranean coastline of South East corner of France. France borders it on three sides and the Mediterranean on the remaining side. It is a mere 15 kilometres from Italy. Monaco is the second smallest country of the world after Vatican City. Its time is UTC +1.

With a population density of 20,000 persons per square kilometre, Monaco is the most densely populated state in the world. It is also one of the most expensive and wealthiest states in the world and a tourist spot for the rich.

English is understood in Monaco. Monte Carlo is its largest quarter. Its ethnic groups include Monegasques, French and Italian. 80 % of its Christians are Catholic. Its government is unitary parliamentary semi- constitutional monarchy.

The House of Grimaldi has ruled Monaco since 1297. Its sovereignty was officially recognised in 1861.

Its per capita GDP nominal is 190, 000 dollars, second highest in the world. Economic development was spurred in the late 19th century with the opening of the first casino, the Monte Carlo Casino, and a railway connection to Paris. Since then the mild climate, scenery, and gambling facilities have contributed to its status as a tourist destination and recreation centre for the rich. It is a major banking centre and a tax haven. It became a UN member in 1993. Monaco is not a member of EU.

MONGOLIA

Republic of Mongolia (Demonym: Mongolian) with Capital: Ulaanbaatar has a Population: 3.3 million in an Area: 1,564,115. Its Language is Kalka Mongolian and Religion: Buddhist 52%, Muslim 3%. Its Currency is Tugrik.

Mongolia is a landlocked nation in East Asia, bordered by Russia to the north and China to the south. In the west, it is 37 kilometres away from Kazakhstan. It is the

largest landlocked and the most thinly populated country in the world. Much of its area is covered by grassy steppe, with mountains to the north and the Gobi desert to the south. The capital is home to almost half the population.

The territory of modern-day Mongolia has been ruled by various nomadic empires, including the Xiongnu, the Rouran, the First and second Turkic Khagnates, the Uyghur Khagnate and others. In 1006, Genghis Khan founded the Mongol Empire, which became the largest contiguous land empire in history. His grandson Kublai Khan conquered China proper and established the Yuan dynasty. After the collapse of the Yuan, the Mongols retreated to Mongolia and resumed their earlier pattern of factional conflict, except during the era of Dayan Khan and Tumen Zasagi Khan. In the 16th century, Tibetan Buddhism spread to Mongolia, being further led by the Manchu-founded Qing dynasty, which absorbed the country in the 17th century. By the early 20th century, almost one-third of the adult male population were Buddhist monks. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Mongolia declared independence and achieved it in 1921. Shortly thereafter, the country became a satellite state of the Soviet Union. In 1924, the Mongolian People's Republic was founded as a socialist state. After the anti-communist revolutions of 1989, Mongolia conducted its own peaceful democratic revolution in early 1990s. This led to a multi-party system, a new constitution of 1992, and a transition to a market economy.

Approximately 30 % of the population is nomadic or semi-nomadic and horse culture remains integral. Non-religious group is 41 % and Islam is concentrated among ethnic Kazakhs. 3% are Shamanist and 1% Christian. Minorities are in western regions. 95% population is Mongol and 4% Kazakh. Population density is 2, the lowest in the world. GDP nominal is 19 billion with a per capita value of 5400 dollars. HDI is high and time UTC + 7 and 8. Mongolia is a member of the UN, Asia Cooperation Dialogue, G77, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, NAM, and a NATO global partner. It joined WTO in 1997 and seeks to expand its participation in regional economic and trade groups.

MONTENEGRO

Republic of Montenegro (Demonym: Montenegrin) with Capital: Podgorica has a Population: 621,000 in an Area: 13,812. Its Languages are Serbian and Bosnian and Religion: Christian 76%, Muslim 19%. Its Currency is Euro.

Montenegro is a country in southeast Europe, located in the Balkans. It is bordered by Bosnia to the north; Serbia to the northeast; Kosovo to the east; Albania to the

southeast; and Croatia and the Adriatic Sea to the northwest with a coastline of nearly 300 kilometres. Its time is UTC+1.

During the Early Medieval period, three principalities were located on the territory of modern day Montenegro. The name Montenegro was first used in the late 15th century. After falling under Ottoman Empire, it gained semi autonomy in 1696. The independence was recognised by the Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. In 1910, it became a kingdom. After WW1, it became a part of Yugoslavia. Following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro together proclaimed a federation. In 2006 Montenegro declared its independence following a referendum. It is a unitary parliamentary republic. 45 % of its population is Montenegrin, 30 % Serb and 9 % Albanian. 72 % of its Christians are Orthodox. Its population density is 44.

It has an upper middle income economy and ranks 49th in the HDI. GDP nominal is 7 billion dollars with a per capita value of 11,000 dollars. It is a member of the UN, NATO, WTO, OSCE, CoE and Central European Free Trade Agreement. It is also a founding member of the Union for the Mediterranean and has been in the process of joining the EU since 2012.

MOROCCO

Kingdom of Morocco (Demonym: Moroccan) with Capital: Rabat has a Population: 38 million in an Area: 446,550. Its Languages are Arabic, French and Religion: Muslim 100%. Its Currency is Dirham.

Morocco is a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa. It shares land borders with Algeria to the east and south, and the disputed territory of Western Sahara to the southwest. Morocco also claims the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta; Melilla and Penon de Velez de la Gomera, and several small Spanish-controlled islands off its coast. Its largest city is Casablanca. Its time is UTC +1.

Its strategic importance can be gauged from the fact that it overlooks the Mediterranean to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. It is situated south of the Gibraltar Strait which has Spain to the north.

The region constituting Morocco has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic era over 300,000 years ago. The Idrisid dynasty founded it in 788 and other dynasties followed. Morocco reached its zenith in the 11th and 12th centuries, under the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, when it controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb. Centuries of Arab migration to the Maghreb since the 7th century shifted the demographic landscape of the region. In the 15th and 16th centuries,

Morocco faced external threats to its sovereignty, with Portugal seizing some territory and the Ottoman Empire encroaching from the east. The Marinid and Saadi dynasties resisted foreign domination, and Morocco was the only North African region to escape Ottoman domination. The Alawi dynasty which rules the country to this day, seized power in 1631, and over the next two centuries expanded diplomatic and commercial relations with the Western world. Morocco's strategic location near the mouth of the Mediterranean drew renewed European interest. In 1912, France and Spain divided the country into respective protectorates, reserving an international zone in Tangier. Following intermittent riots and revolts against the colonial rule in 1956, Morocco regained its independence and reunified. It is a semi-constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament.

Since independence, Morocco has remained relatively stable. It has the fifth largest economy in Africa and wields significant influence in both Africa and the Arab world. Morocco claims ownership of the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara, which it has designated its Southern Provinces. In 1975 after Spain agreed to decolonise the territory and cede its control to Morocco and Mauritania, a guerrilla war broke out between these two powers and some of the local inhabitants. In 1979, Mauritania relinquished its claim to the area, but the war continued to rage. In 1991, a ceasefire agreement was reached, but the issue of sovereignty remained unresolved. Today, Morocco occupies two-thirds of the territory, and efforts to resolve the dispute have thus far failed to break the political deadlock.

Moroccan identity is a mix of Arab, Berber, African and European cultures. 67 % of its population is Arab and 31% Berber. Almost the entire population is Sunni Muslim. GDP nominal is 150 billion dollars with a per capita value of 4000 dollars. Its HDI is medium. It is considered a middle power in global affairs and holds membership in the Arab League, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Union for the Mediterranean and the African Union.

MOZAMBIQUE

Republic of Mozambique (Demonym: Mozambican) with Capital: Maputo has a Population: 31 million in an Area: 801,590. Its Languages are Portuguese and Bantu and Religion: Christian 56%, Muslim 18%. Its Currency is Metical.

Mozambique is a country in southeast Africa. It is bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east; Tanzania to the north; Malawi and Zambia to the northwest; Zimbabwe to the west; and, Eswatini and South Africa to the southwest. The sovereign state is separated from the Comoros, Mayotte, and Madagascar by the Mozambique Channel to the east. The capital Maputo is its largest city. It is divided into two

topographical regions by Zambezi River. Its lakes and synonymous Channel in the Indian Ocean render it important. Its time is UTC +2.

Between the 7th and 11th centuries, a series of Swahili port towns developed on that area, which contributed to the development of a distinct Swahili culture and dialect. In the late medieval period, these towns were frequented by traders from Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Arabia, Persia and India. The voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1498 marked the arrival of the Portuguese, who began a gradual process of colonisation and settlement in 1505. After over four centuries of Portuguese rule, Mozambique gained independence in 1975, becoming the People's Republic of Mozambique shortly thereafter. After only two years of independence, the country descended into an intense and protracted civil war lasting from 1977 to 1992. In 1994, Mozambique held its first multiparty elections and has since remained a relatively stable presidential republic, although it still faces a low-intensity insurgency distinctively in the farthermost regions from the southern capital and where Islam is dominant.

Despite its rich and extensive natural resources, the economy is based chiefly on fishery and agriculture with a growing industry of food and beverages, chemical manufacturing, aluminium and oil. The tourism sector is expanding. South Africa remains Mozambique's main trading partner. It has close relationship with Portugal, with a perspective on other European markets. Since 2001, Mozambique's GDP growth has been thriving, but the nation is still one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world. It ranks low in GDP per capita, HDI, inequality and life expectancy. Its population density is 29. GDP nominal is 22 billion dollars with a per capita value of 650 dollars.

99 % of its population is black with Bantu people in majority. The only official language is Portuguese, spoken in urban areas. Mozambique is a member of the UN, AU, Commonwealth of Nations, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, NAM, and the Southern African Development Community. It is a member of the OIC despite being a Christian country. It is also an observer to Francophonie.

MYANMAR

Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Demonym: Burmese) with Capital: Naypyidaw has a Population of 55 million in an Area of 678500. Its Language is Burmese and Religion: Buddhist 80%, Christian 6%. Its Currency is Kyat.

Myanmar is a country in Southeast Asia. It is the largest country by area in the mainland Southeast Asia. It is bordered by Bangladesh and India to the northwest; China to the northeast; Laos and Thailand to the east and southeast; and Andaman

Sea and Bay of Bengal to the south and southwest. Its largest city is Yangon. Myanmar occupies a long coastline in the Bay of Bengal. Its time is UTC +6.30.

Early civilisations in the area include the Tibeto-Burman speaking Pyu city-states in Upper Myanmar and the Mon Kingdoms in Lower Myanmar. In the 9th century, the Bamar people entered the upper Irrawaddy valley, and following the establishment of pagan Kingdom in the 1050s, the Burmese language, culture, and Theravada Buddhism slowly became dominant in the country. The Pagan Kingdom fell to Mongol invasions, and several warring states emerged in the 16th century, reunified by the Taungoo dynasty. The country became the largest empire in the history of Southeast Asia for a short period. The early 19th century Konbaung dynasty ruled over an area that included modern Myanmar and briefly controlled the present Indian states of Manipur and Assam as well. The British East India Company seized control of Myanmar after three Anglo-Burmese wars in the 19th century, and the country became a British colony. After a brief Japanese occupation, Myanmar was conquered by the Allies. In 1948, Burma declared independence under the Burma Independence Act 1947.

Myanmar's post-independence history has continued to be checkered by unrest and conflict. Military took over in 1962 under the Burma Socialist Programme Party. The country has a poor human rights record particularly in relation to minority Muslims.

It is very rich in natural resources such as jade, gems, oil, natural gas, teak and other minerals. It is also endowed with renewable energy and has the highest solar power potential in the Great Mekong sub region. Instability, factional violence, corruption, poor infrastructure and income inequality are its major problems. 600,000 people are displaced across Myanmar due to surge in violence since 2021.

Bamar are 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7% and Indian 2% of the population. 4 %. People are Muslim. Population density is 200. GDP nominal is 277 billion with a per capita value of 5000 dollars. Its HDI is medium. It is a member of East Asia Summit, NAM, ASEAN and BIMSTEC, but is not a member of the Commonwealth. It is also a dialogue partner in SCO.

NAMIBIA

Republic of Namibia (Demonym: Namibian) with Capital: Windhoek has a Population: 3 million in an Area: 825,615. Its Languages are Afrikaans and English and Religion: Christian 98%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Namibia is in southern Africa. Its longest border is western on Atlantic Ocean. In the north, it shares borders with Zambia and Angola. Botswana is to its east and South

Africa to the south. It has no border with Zimbabwe but only Zambezi River separates the two neighbours merely by 200 metres. There is a point on Zambezi River where boundaries of no less than 4 countries meet. These include Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Namib is the oldest desert in the world. Its time is UTC +2. Half of the population is Ovambo and 10 % Kavango. 23 % Christians are Lutheran and 17 % Catholic. At 3.7, its population density is the second lowest in the world after Mongolia.

The driest country in sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia has been inhabited since prehistoric times by Khol, San, Damara and Nama people. Around the 14th century, immigrating Bantu people arrived as part of the Bantu expansion. Since then the Bantu groups, the largest being Ovambo have dominated the population.

In 1878, Namibia fell to the British Cape of Good Hope. In 1884; Germans won the territory naming it German South Western Africa. Between 1904 and 1908, German troops waged a punitive campaign against the Herero and Nama which escalated into the first genocide of the 20th century. In 1915 South Africa captured it and the apartheid also applied to Namibia. In 1920, the League of Nations mandated administration of the colony to South Africa. In 1948 the National Party was elected to power and it applied apartheid to the then South West Africa. In the later 20th century, the native African activists rose for independence. This resulted in the UN assuming direct control over the territory in 1966, but South Africa maintained de facto rule. South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) won interim government in 1985 and full independence in 1990. However, Walvis Bay and the Penguin Islands remained under South Africa until 1994. Now Namibia is a stable parliamentary democracy.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 5000 dollars and HDI medium. Agriculture, tourism and mining are its sources of income. Gem diamonds, uranium, gold, silver and base metals are mined. Namibia is a member state of the UN, SADC, AU and the Commonwealth of Nations.

NAURU

Republic of Nauru (Demonym: Nauruan) with Capital: Yaren District has a Population of 10000 in an Area of 21 square kilometres. Its major languages are Nauruan and English. Its Religion is Christian 79% and Buddhist 1% and Currency, Dollar.

Nauru is a microstate in Micronesia, a sub region of Oceania in the Central Pacific. It is small relative to the size of its neighbours. It lies west of Kiribati; northwest of Tuvalu; northeast of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, northwest of the Federated States of Micronesia and south of Marshall Islands.

Nauru was settled by Micronesian and Polynesian people in 1500 BC. Germans colonised it in the late 19th century AD. After the First World War, it came under trusteeship of the League of Nations. During the Second World War, it fell to Japan. After the war, it was made the trust territory of the UNO and was jointly managed by Australia, New Zealand and Britain. It gained independence in 1968. Nauru is the 3rd smallest country in the world both by area and population. Vatican City is the smallest in area and population and Tuvalu the second smallest in population. Nauru is the smallest state in the South Pacific and outside Europe. It is also the smallest island state and the smallest republic in the world. Its population density is 500 per square kilometre. Its time zone is UTC + 12.

Nauru became a tax haven and illegal money laundering centre. The international pressure to achieve transparency in finances continues. As a result of heavy dependence on Australia, some sources identify Nauru as a client state of Australia. Nauru ran hotels in Sydney and Melbourne which were sold out. Australia has a Regional Processing Centre in Nauru which is a controversial offshore Australian immigration detention facility.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 10,000 dollars. Till 1980s, its economy was the strongest due to phosphate mining. These reserves were exhausted in 1990. There are few other resources. Nauru is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. In 1969, it became a member of the South Pacific Community.

NEPAL

Democratic Republic of Nepal (Demonym: Nepalese) with Capital: Kathmandu has a Population of 31 million in an Area of 147,181 square kilometres. Its major Languages are Nepali and English. Its Religion is Hindu 81%, Buddhist 8% and Currency Rupee.

Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia. It is mainly situated in the Himalayas but also includes parts of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. It borders the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north and India to the south, east and west. It is narrowly separated from Bangladesh by the 27 kilometre wide Siliguri Corridor in the southeast, and from Bhutan by the Indian state of Sikkim. Nepal has a diverse geography, including fertile plains, subalpine forested hills, and eight of the world's ten tallest mountains including Mount Everest, the highest point on earth. Its capital

is also its largest city. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural state, with Nepali as the official language. It is 48th in population and 93rd in area in the world.

The name Nepal is first recorded in texts from the Vedic period of the Indian subcontinent, the era in ancient Nepal when Hinduism was founded as the predominant religion of the country. In the middle of the first millennium BC, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born in Lumbini in southern Nepal. Parts of northern Nepal were intertwined with the culture of Tibet. The centrally located Kathmandu Valley is closer to the culture of Indo-Aryans, and was the seat of the prosperous Newar confederacy known as Nepal Mandala. The Himalayan branch of the ancient Silk Road was dominated by the valley's traders. The cosmopolitan region developed distinct traditional art and architecture. By the 18th century, the Gorkha Kingdom achieved the unification of Nepal. The Shah Dynasty established the Kingdom of Nepal and later formed an alliance with the British Empire, under its Rana dynasty of premiers. The country was never colonised but served as a buffer state between Imperial China and British India. Parliamentary democracy was introduced in 1951 but was twice superseded by Nepalese monarchs in 1960 and 2005.

The Nepalese Civil War in the 1990s and early 2000s resulted in the establishment of a secular republic in 2008, ending the world's last Hindu monarchy. The constitution of Nepal, adopted in 2015, affirms the country as a secular federal parliamentary republic divided into seven provinces. Its armed forces are the 5th largest in South Asia and are notable for their Gurkha history, particularly during the world wars, and have been a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping operations.

Its ethnic groups include 31 % Khas Arya, and 2 to 7 % each of Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Newar, Musalman, Yadav, Rai and Gurang. 5 % population is Muslim. Its population density is 180 and GDP nominal 41 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1400 dollars. Its HDI is medium and time is UTC + 5.45.

Nepal was admitted into the UN in 1955, and friendship treaties were signed with India in 1950 and China in 1960. It hosts the permanent secretariat of the SAARC, of which it is a founding member. Nepal is also a member of the NAM and the Bay of Bengal Initiative.

NETHERLANDS

Kingdom of the Netherlands (Demony: Dutch) with Capital: Amsterdam has a Population: 18 million in an Area: 41865. Its Languages are Dutch and Frisian and Religion: Christian 34%, Muslim 5%. Its Currency is Euro.

The Netherlands is a country located in North-western Europe with overseas territories in the Caribbean. It is the largest of the four constituent countries of the kingdom of the Netherlands and it consists of 12 provinces. It borders Germany to the east and Belgium to the south, with a North Sea coastline to the north and west. It shares maritime borders with the UK, Germany and Belgium. The four largest cities in the Netherlands are Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Amsterdam is the capital and the most populous city.

Informally, the Netherlands is also called Holland. Its official language is Dutch with West Frisian as a secondary official language in the province of Friesland. Dutch, English and Papiamento are the official languages in the Caribbean territories. Its time is UTC + 1.

Netherlands literally means **lower countries** in reference to the country having low elevation and flat topography, with 26 % territory situated below the sea level. Most of the areas below sea level, known as polders, are the result of land reclamation that began in the 14th century. In the Republican Period, which began in 1588, the Netherlands entered a unique era of political, economic, and cultural greatness, ranked among the most powerful and influential in Europe and the world. This period is known as the Dutch Golden Age. During this time, its trading companies, the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company established colonies and trading posts all over the world.

The Netherlands is the 16th most densely populated world country, with a density of 535. Nevertheless, it is the world's second largest exporter of food and agricultural products by value, owing to its fertile soil, mild climate, intensive agriculture, and inventiveness. Its GDP nominal is 1 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 62,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.946, very high.

The Netherlands has been a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with a unitary structure since 1848. 20 % of Dutch Christian population adheres to Catholicism. The country has a tradition of pillarisation, meaning separation of citizens into groups by religion and political beliefs. It has a long record of social tolerance, having legalised prostitution and euthanasia, along with maintaining a liberal drug policy. The Netherlands allowed women's suffrage in 1919 and was the first country to legalise same sex marriage in 2001. Its mixed market advanced economy has the 11th highest per capita income globally. The Hague holds the seat of the state's general, cabinet and supreme court. The port of Rotterdam is the busiest in Europe. The Netherlands is a founding member of the EU, Eurozone, G10, NATO, OECD and WTO, as well as a part of the Schengen Area and the trilateral Benelux Union. It hosts intergovernmental organisations and international courts, many of which are in Hague.

NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa (Mauri name of New Zealand) **with** Demonym: New Zealander and Capital: Wellington has a Population: 5 million in an Area: 268021. Its Languages are English and Maori and Religion: Christian 37%, Hindu 3%. Its Currency is Dollar.

New Zealand is situated in South West Pacific. It lies 1200 kilometres southeast of Australia across the Tasman Sea and south of the islands of New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga. New Zealand consists of two main landmasses; the North Island and the South Island. It also has 700 smaller islands and is the sixth largest island country in the world. Its varied topography and sharp mountain peaks, including the Southern Alps, owe much to the tectonic uplift and volcanic eruptions. Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand. International Date Line passes through its territories and it uses two time zones; UTC + 12 and 13.

The islands of New Zealand were the last large inhabitable land to be settled by humans. Between 1280 and 1350, Polynesians began to develop a distinct Maori culture. In 1642, the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman became the first European to sight and record New Zealand. In 1840, the UK and Maori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi, which in its English version, declared British sovereignty over the islands. In 1841, New Zealand became a colony within the British Empire. A series of conflicts between the government and the natives resulted in confiscation of large lands by the British. New Zealand became a dominion in 1907 and gained independence in 1947 as a Commonwealth realm, retaining the British monarch as its constitutional head.

72 % of its population is European and 16 % Maori. 49 % people are without religion, and apart from Christians and Hindus, there are 2 % Muslims in the population. Its population density is 19.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 47, 278 dollars, being 23rd highest in the world. Its HDI is 0.937, very high. New Zealand is a high income country and has an advanced market economy. The Kiwi dollar is also used in its islands of Niue and Tokelau, Cook Islands of Australia and Pitcairn's Islands of the UK in the mid-South Pacific.

Extractive industries have historically contributed strongly to its economy. These focused on whaling, flax, kauri gum and native timber. Refrigerated meat shipment started in 1882. This led to the establishment of meat and dairy exports to Britain, a trade that provided the basis for strong economic growth.

Higher demand for agricultural products from the UK and the USA helped in achieving higher living standards than both Australia and Western Europe in the 1950s and the 1960s. Exports account for 24 % of its output. Food products constitute 55 % of exports and wood 7 %. Dairy farming has become the largest

export earner in recent years reaching 18 % of total exports. Wool too is a major agricultural export. Other exports include machinery and wine. China, Australia, the EU, USA and Japan are its major trading partners. Its service sector is the largest followed by manufacturing; construction, farming and raw material extraction. Tourism too plays a significant role in the economy.

New Zealand is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, ANZUS, UKUSA, OECD, ASEAN + 6, APEC, the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum.

NICARAGUA

Republic of Nicaragua (Demonym: Nicaraguan) with Capital: Managua has a Population: 6.3 million in an Area: 130,375. Its major Languages are Spanish and Miskito, and major Religion: Christian 84%. Its Currency is Cordoba.

It is the largest country in Central American Isthmus. It is bordered by Honduras to the northwest; the Caribbean to the east; Costa Rica to the south, and Pacific Ocean to the southwest. The capital Managua is also the largest city in the country and the third largest city in Central America.

The multi-ethnic population of Nicaragua includes 9 % Mestizo, 17 % white and 9 % black people. 55 % of the Christians are Catholic and 27 % are Protestant. Its population density is 51.

Originally inhabited by various indigenous cultures since ancient times, the region was conquered by the Spanish Empire in the 16th century. It gained independence from Spain in 1821. The Mosquito Coast followed a different historical path, being colonised by the English in the 17th century and later coming under the British rule. It became an autonomous territory of Nicaragua in 1860 and its northernmost part was transferred to Honduras in 1960.

Since independence, Nicaragua has undergone periods of political unrest, dictatorship, occupation and fiscal crisis, including the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1960s and 1970s and the Contra War of the 1980s.

With a GDP nominal per capita of 2600 dollars, Nicaragua is among the poorest countries in the world. Remittances from Nicaraguans living abroad amount to a billion dollars per year and account for 15 % of the GDP. Agriculture represents 16 % of the GDP, the highest figure in Central Americas. The economic growth in Nicaragua is declining. 48 % population lives below poverty line. 80 % of indigenous

people make 5 % of population and live on 2 dollars per day. Poland wrote off 30 million dollars borrowed by Nicaragua.

Agriculture constitutes 60 % of exports. Coffee and tobacco are cash crops. Leaf and cigars are exported to neighbours fetching 200 million dollars per year. Soil erosion and pollution from heavy use of pesticides have become serious concerns in the cotton district. Yields and exports are thus on decline in cotton field. Bananas, sugarcane and cassava are grown in the country. The root crop cassava is also used in pudding. The agriculture has benefitted because of strong ties with Venezuela which alone imports its 200 million dollars' worth of agricultural products. Some of the new export oriented crops are peanuts, sesame, melons and onions. Fishing boats bring shrimps and lobsters from the Caribbean for processing plants. A turtle fishery thrived on the Caribbean Coast before it collapsed from overexploitation. Mining is becoming a major industry in the country but restrictions are placed on lumbering due to environmental concerns.

Nicaragua has long been considered as a possible site for a new canal that could supplement the Panama Canal, connecting the Caribbean Sea, and therefore the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.

NIGER

Republic of Niger (Demonym: Nigerien) with Capital: Niamey has a Population: 22 million in an Area: 1267000. Its Languages are French and Arabic and Religion: Muslim 99%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Niger, officially the Republic of the Niger, is a landlocked country in West Africa named after the Niger River. It is bordered by Libya to the north; Chad to the east; Nigeria and Benin to the south; Burkina Faso to the southwest; Mali to the west, and Algeria to the northwest. Its highest elevation is 6634 feet and time UTC + 1.

Niger is the largest country by area in West Africa and the 21st largest in the world. Its 80 % land is in Sahara desert. Most of its population lives in clusters in the far south and west. Its population density is 12 per square kilometre and population growth is 2.9 per annum. The capital Niamey is its largest city. It is in south west corner of the country. Its non-desert part is threatened by desertification and drought. 53 % people are Hausa, 21 % Zarma and 11 % Tuareg. Diversity in society is due to long independent histories of its several ethnic groups and regions and their short living in a single state.

It gained independence from France in 1960. Since independence, it lived under five constitutions and three military rules. After the military coup in 2010, it became a

multiparty state. Now it is a unitary semi-presidential republic. Niamey is home to a US drone base.

It has subsistence economy with some export of raw materials especially uranium ore. Its development is obstructed due to its being landlocked, desert terrain, inefficient agriculture, high fertility rates, and lack of infrastructure and environment degradation. Majority of the population is rural with little access even to basic education. Its HDI is low and Niger is 188th out of 188 in HDI. Its GDP nominal per capita is 630.

NIGERIA

Federal Republic of Nigeria (Demonym: Nigerian) with Capital: Abuja has a Population: 232 million in an Area: 923,769. Its Languages are English and Hausa and Religion: Muslim 55%, Christian 39%. Its Currency is Naira.

Nigeria is a country in West Africa. It is situated between the Sahel to the north and the Gulf of Guinea to the south in the Atlantic Ocean. It borders Niger to the north; Chad to the northeast, Cameroon to the east, and Benin to the west. It is smaller in area than Niger. Its largest city is Lagos, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world and the largest in Africa. Its time is UTC + 1. Contrary to the practice in the former British colonies, Nigeria drives on the right side.

Nigeria is a regional power in Africa and a middle power in international affairs. It is considered the Giant of Africa due to its population and economy. It is the 6th most populous nation in the world and the most populous nation in Africa, so much so that every 4th African is a Nigerian. Its population density is 250 per square kilometre. It has the third largest youth after India and China with 90 million of its population being under 18.

Nigeria has been home to several indigenous pre-colonial states and kingdoms since the second millennium BC, with the Nok civilisation in the 15th century BC marking the first internal unification. The modern state originated with British colonialism in the 19th century, taking its present territorial shape with the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914. The British set up administrative and legal structures while practising indirect rule through traditional chiefdoms. Nigeria became a formally independent federation in 1960. It experienced a civil war from 1967 to 1970, followed by a succession of military dictatorships and democratically elected civilian governments until achieving a stable government in the 1999 presidential election. However, the country frequently

experiences electoral fraud, and corruption is significantly present in all levels of Nigerian politics.

Nigeria is a multinational state inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures. The three largest groups are the Hausa in the north, Yoruba in the west and Igbo in the east, together constituting 60 per cent of the total population. Muslims live in North and Christians in South. Indigenous religions, such as those native to the Igbo and Yoruba ethnicities, are in the minority.

It has the 10th largest oil reserves. Its economy is second largest in Africa, the 39th largest by nominal GDP and 27th largest by PPP in the world. It is an emerging market. Its GDP nominal per capita is 2000 dollars.

Nigeria is a founding member of the AU, and a member of many international organisations including the UN, NAM, ECOWAS, OIC and OPEC. It is also a member of the informal MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) group of countries and is one of the Next Eleven economies. In 2011, MINT members created a group like BRICS for rapid economic development.

NORTH KOREA

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Demonym: North Korean) with Capital: Pyongyang has a Population: 26 million in an Area: 120,540. Its Language is Korean and Religion: Buddhist 2%, Christian 2%. Its Currency is won.

North Korea is a country in East Asia. It constitutes the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. It lies between Yellow Sea to the west and Sea of Japan to the east. North Korea shares a long border with China in the northwest and a small border with Russia in the northeast at the Yalu and Tumen rivers and South Korea at the Korean demilitarised zone. North Korea, like its southern counterpart, claims to be the legitimate government of the entire peninsula and adjacent islands. The capital is the largest city. Its time is UTC +9.

With the Japanese surrender in 1945 after WW2, Korea was divided into two zones along the 38th parallel, with the north occupied by the Soviet Union and the south by the USA. IN 1948, separate governments were formed in Korea; the socialist and Soviet aligned DPR and the capitalist western aligned Republic of Korea.

The Korean War began when North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. In 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement brought about a ceasefire and established a DMZ, but no formal peace treaty has ever been signed. Post-war North Korea benefited

greatly from economic aid and expertise provided by eastern bloc countries. However, Kim IL Sung, the first national leader, promoted his personal philosophy of Juche as the state ideology. Pyongyang's international isolation sharply accelerated from 1980s onwards as the Cold War came to an end. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a sharp decline to the North Korean economy. From 1994 to 1998, North Korea suffered a famine with the population suffering from malnutrition. In 2024, North Korea formally abandoned efforts to peacefully reunify Korea.

North Korea is a totalitarian dictatorship centred on the Kim family. Amnesty international considers the country to have the worst human rights record in the world. North Korea claims to be an independent socialist state which holds democratic elections; however, they are considered unfair. The Workers Party of Korea is the ruling party. The means of production are owned by the state through state run enterprises and collectivised farms. Most services are subsidised. Its GDP is 16 billion dollars with a per capita value of 640 dollars.

North Korea follows Songun, a military first policy which prioritises the Korean People's Army in state affairs and the allocation of resources. It possesses nuclear weapons and its active duty army has 1.28 million employees. Its army is the 4th largest in the world after China, US and India. With 5 % of population in military, it is the most militarised nation in the world. It is also known for its missile technology.

It is a member of the UN, the NAM, the G77, and the ASEAN regional forum. 13 % of its population follows Chondolism, 12 % Shamanism and 2 % Buddhism. Its population density is 212.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Northern Macedonia (Demonym: Macedonian) with Capital: Skopje has a Population: 2 million in an Area: 25,713. Its major Languages include Macedonian and Albanian and Religion: Christian 61%, Muslim 32%. Its Currency is Dinar.

North Macedonia is a landlocked country in the Balkan Peninsula of South East Europe. It has Kosovo to the northwest; Serbia to the northeast; Bulgaria to the east; Greece to the south and Albania to the west. The country constitutes northern third of the larger geographical region of Macedonia. Its time is UTC + 1.

North Macedonia is one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. It declared independence in 1991 with the name Macedonia. The ancient Greece too had this name. After objections from Greece, the country was named to Northern Macedonia in 2019. Its significant Muslim population is noteworthy.

The region's history starts with the Kingdom of Paeonia. In the late 6th century BC, the area was subjugated by the Persian Empire, and incorporated into the Kingdom of Macedonia. In the 4th century BC, the Romans conquered the region. In the 2nd century BC, the area remained part of the Byzantine Empire, but was raided and settled by Slavic tribes beginning in 6th century. Following centuries of contention between Bulgarian, Byzantine and Serbian Empires, it remained part of the Ottoman Empire from the mid-14th until the early 20th century. Following Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the modern territory of Macedonian came under Serbian rule. During WW1, it fell to Bulgaria but later returned to Serbian rule. In 1945, it became part of Yugoslavia and in 1991, it peacefully seceded from Yugoslavia. Ethnically, Macedonians are 59 % and Albanians 25 % of the population. 46 % Christians are Orthodox. It is a unitary parliamentary republic with a population density of 80.

It is an upper middle income economy and ranks 82nd in HDI. It provides social security, universal healthcare and free primary and secondary education to the citizens. Its GDP nominal is 15 billion dollars with a per capita value of 7700 dollars. It is a member of NATO, CoE, World Bank, OSCE, CEFTA, BSEC, and WTO.

NORWAY

Kingdom of Norway (Demonym: Norwegian) with Capital: Oslo has a Population: 5.5 million in an Area: 385,207. Its Languages are Norwegian and Sami and Religion (Christian 76%, Muslim 4%). Its Currency is Euro.

Norway is a Nordic country in North West Europe. Nord is a geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and North Atlantic. It includes the sovereign states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden plus some autonomous territories of Faroe Islands and Greenland. Its time is UTC + 1 and it drives on the right side. The capital is at position 60N11E. 82 % of its population is Norwegian and the remaining population is a mixture of different ethnicities.

Norway comprises western and northernmost portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula. It shares a long border with Sweden to the east and its northern part has a small border with Finland to the south. The remote Arctic Island of Jan Mayen and Svalbard are also part of Norway. In addition, Bouvet Island in Antarctica is a dependency of Norway.

Norway is symbolic of prosperity and social development. Its population density is 14 per square kilometre. Its GDP per capita is 65, 000 dollars, the 6th highest in the world. Its HDI is 0.957 rated number one in the world

Vikings seafarers settled in Norway. Norway was established in 872. It was united with Denmark and Sweden too. It separated from Sweden in 1905. In the First World War, it remained neutral. In the Second World War too, it was neutral but remained under German occupation for five years.

OMAN

Sultanate of Oman (Demonym: Omani) with Capital: Muscat has a Population: 4.8 million in an Area: 212460. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 89%, Hindu 6%. Its Currency is Rial.

Oman is an Arab country on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula and spans the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It shares land borders with the UAE to the northwest, Saudi Arabia to the west and Yemen to the southwest. Oman is the nearest Gulf state to Pakistan. It is the 2nd largest in area in the GCC after Saudi Arabia. The capital is the largest city. The coast is formed by the Arabian Sea on the southeast, and the Gulf of Oman on the northeast. The Madha and Musandam exclaves are surrounded by the UAE on their land borders, with the Strait of Hormuz, which it shares with Iran, and the Gulf of Oman forming Musandam coastal boundaries. Its time is UTC +4.

From the 17th century, the Omani Sultanate was an empire, vying with the Portuguese and British Empires for influence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. At its peak in the 19th century, Omani influence and control extended across the Strait of Hormuz to Iran and Pakistan, and as far south as Zanzibar. In the 20th century, the sultanate came under the influence of the United Kingdom. For over 300 years, the relations between the two empires were based on mutual benefit. The UK recognised Oman's geographical importance as a trading hub that secured their trading lanes in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean and protected their empire in the Indian sub-continent.

Oman is an absolute monarchy led by a sultan, with power passed down through the male line. Qaboos bin Said was the Sultan from 1970 until his death in 2020. Qaboos died childless and his cousin Haitham bin Tariq succeeded him by mutual agreement of the family. 47% Muslims are Sunni, 35% Ibadi and 7% Shia. Population density is 15.

Formerly a maritime empire, Oman is the oldest continuously independent state in the Arab world. It has oil reserves ranked 22nd globally. In 2010, the UNDP ranked Oman as the most improved nation in the world in terms of development during the preceding 40 years. A portion of its economy involves tourism and trading fish, dates and other agricultural produce. Oman is categorised as a high-income economy and

the 48th most peaceful country in the world according to the Global Peace Index. GDP nominal is 108 billion dollars with a per capita value of 22000 dollars. Its HDI is rated very high. It is a member of the UN, the Arab League, the GCC, the NAM and the OIC.

PAKISTAN

Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Demonym: Pakistani) with Capital: Islamabad has a Population of 240 million in an Area: 803,940. Its major Languages are Urdu and English and Religion: Muslim 96%, Hindu 2%. Its Currency is Rupee.

Pakistan is a country in South Asia. It is the 5th most populous country in the world and second most populous Muslim country. It is the 33rd largest in area in the world and the 9th largest in Asia. It shares borders with India to the east; Arabian Sea to the south; Iran to the southwest; Afghanistan to the west and China to the northeast. It is separated narrowly from Tajikistan by Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan in the northwest. It also shares maritime borders with India in the southeast and with Oman in the Gulf of Oman in the southwest. Karachi is its largest city and financial centre. Its time is UTC +5.

Pakistan is the site of several ancient cultures, including the 8500-year old Neolithic site of Mehrgarh in Baluchistan, the Indus Valley civilisation of the Bronze Age, and the ancient Gandhara civilisation. The regions that comprise the modern state of Pakistan were the realm of multiple empires and dynasties, including the Achaemnid, the Maurya, the Kushan, the Gupta, the Umayyid Caliphate in its southern regions, the Samma, the Hindu Shahis, the Shah Miris, the Ghazanvids, the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, and most recently, the British Raj from 1858 to 1947.

Spurred by the Pakistan Movement, which sought a homeland for the Muslims of British India, and election victories in 1946 by the All India Muslim League, Pakistan gained independence in 1947 after the partition of the British Indian Empire, which awarded separate statehood to its Muslim-majority regions and was accompanied by an unparalleled mass migration and loss of life. Initially a dominion of the British Commonwealth, Pakistan officially drafted its constitution in 1956, and emerged as a declared Islamic republic. In 1971, the enclave of East Pakistan seceded as the new country of Bangladesh after a nine-month long civil war. In the following decades, Pakistan has been ruled by governments whose descriptions, although complex, commonly alternated between civilian and military. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pathan and Baluch are major ethnic groups. 96 % population is Muslim, 2 % Hindu and 1 % Christian. Population density is 273.

As per Samuel Philip Huntington, Pakistan is a probable core state for the Muslim civilization. It is considered a middle power, with the world's sixth largest standing armed forces. It is a declared nuclear weapons state, and is ranked amongst the emerging and growth-leading economies, with a rapidly-growing middle class. There are problems like poverty, illiteracy, corruption and terrorism. Its GDP nominal is 340 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1500 dollars. Its HDI is low.

Pakistan is member of the UN, SCO, OIC, the Commonwealth of Nations, SAARC, and the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition. It is designated as a major non-NATO ally by the USA.

PALAU

Republic of Palau (Demony: Palauan) with Capital: Ngerulmud has a Population: 20000 in an Area: 458. Its Languages are English and Palauan and Religion: Christian 80%. Its Currency is US Dollar.

Palau is an island country located in the Micronesia region of Oceania in the Western Pacific. It shares maritime borders with international waters to the north; the Federated States of Micronesia to the east, Indonesia to the south and Philippines to the northwest. It contains 340 islands and together with the Federated States of Micronesia, forms the western chain of the Caroline Islands. It is significant due to its big area. Koror is its most populous island but the capital is located on Babeldaobin Island. Its population density is 40 per square kilometre. Its time is UTC + 9 hours.

Palau was settled 3000 years ago by migrants from Maritime Southeast Asia. It was first drawn on a European map by Germany and became a part of the Spanish East Indies in 1885. Following the Spanish defeat in the Spanish American War in 1898, the islands were sold to Germany under a German Spanish Treaty. After the First World War, the islands were made part of Japan by League of Nations. During the Second World War, Palau was made a part of the US governed Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Having voted in a referendum against joining the Federated States of Micronesia in 1978, the islands gained full sovereignty in 1994 under a Compact of Free Association with the US.

Politically, Palau is a presidential republic in free association with the US. The US provides Palau with defence, funding and access to social services. 65 % population of the nation is Palauan and 30 % Asian. Its GDP nominal per capita is 17000 dollars. Tourism, subsistence agriculture and fishing are the main sources of its economy.

PALESTINE

State of Palestine (Demony: Palestinian) with Capital: Al-Qudus has a Population: 5.5 million in Area: 6020. Its Languages: Arabic, English and Religion: Muslim 100%. It's Currency: Dinar.

Palestine is a country in the Levant region of Western Asia. It is officially recognised as a state by the UN and numerous countries. The state comprises the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Jerusalem is its proclaimed capital and its administrative centre is currently in Ramallah. The entire territory has been occupied by Israel since the Six Day War of 1967. It shares borders with Israel to the east and north, Jordan to the east, and Egypt to the southwest. Its population density is 730 and time UTC + 2.

Palestine's ancient history spans thousands of years, with its crossroads location witnessing the rise and fall of empires, shaping world history. The Canaanites, Israelites, Semitics, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Byzantines all left their mark on the land. In addition to its historical significance, Palestine holds profound importance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sacred sites such as the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Aqsa Mosque draw countless pilgrims and visitors each year. Throughout history, the region has seen periods of coexistence and conflict between different religious and ethnic groups. Notably, during the Middle Ages, Jewish communities faced persecution and found protection under Muslim rule in Palestine and the wider Islamic world. The Ottoman Empire, which controlled Palestine from the 16th century until its collapse at the end of WW1, provided a sanctuary for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe. The end of the Ottoman rule marked a new chapter in Palestine's history. Following WW1, the British Empire assumed control of the region under the League of Nations mandate. The British Mandate for Palestine, established in 1920, brought significant changes to the political and social landscape of the area, setting the stage for the conflicts and struggles that would follow.

The conflict has its roots in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the creation of large Palestinian refugee population. Subsequent Arab-Israeli war, including the six-day war in 1967, resulted in occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 1988, the PNC, the legislative body of the PLO led by Yasser Arafat, declared the establishment of Palestine. Peaceful resolution gained momentum with the signing of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s. These agreements between Israel and the PLO, aimed to establish a government and the eventual creation of Palestinian state. However, the implementation of the Oslo Accords faced significant challenges, including the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and on-going security concerns. In 2007, internal divisions between Palestinian political factions

led to a takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Since then the West Bank has been governed by the Palestinian Authority under Fatah and the Gaza under Hamas. The present crisis seems to be unending.

Its GDP nominal is 37 billion dollars with a per capita value of 3500. Its HDI is high Palestine is a member of UN, OIC and Arab League.

PANAMA

Republic of Panama (Demonym: Panamanian) with Capital: Panama City has a Population: 4.2 million in Area: 78200. Its Languages are Spanish and English and Religion: Christian 93%, Muslim1%. Its Currency is Balboa.

Panama is a transcontinental country in Central America. It is bordered by Costa Rica to the west, Colombia to the south, Caribbean to the north and Pacific Ocean to the south. The capital Panama City is the largest city in the country. Its metropolitan area is home to half of the national population. Jungles of Panama are home to abundance of plants and animals. Its population density is 56 and time UTC -5.

Before the arrival of Spanish colonists in the 16th century, Panama was inhabited by local tribes. It broke away from Spain in 1821 and joined the Republic of Gran Colombia, a union of Nueva Grenada, Ecuador and Venezuela. Gran Colombia dissolved in 1831. Panama and Nueva Grenada eventually became the Republic of Colombia. With the backing of the US, Panama seceded from Colombia in 1903, allowing the construction of Panama Canal to be completed by the US Army Corps of Engineers between 1904 and 1914. The canal was transferred to Panama in 1999. The surrounding territory was first returned in 1979.

Revenue from the canal tolls continues to represent a significant portion of GDP, especially since the expansion of the canal project in 2016 doubled its capacity. Commercial banking and tourism are major sectors. The economy is high income.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 19000 dollars and HDI very high. Panama is a founding member of the UN, OAS, Latin American Integration Association, Group of 77, WHO and NAM.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Independent State of Papua New Guinea (Demonym: Papuan) with Capital: Port Moresby has a Population: 15 million in an Area: 462, 840. Its Languages are English and Motu and Religion: Christian 99%. Its Currency is Kina.

Papua New Guinea is a country in Oceania. It occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea. Its western part forms Irian Jaya province of Indonesia. The country also has offshore islands in Melanesia. It shares borders only with Indonesia. It has north eastern Australia to its south across the Gulf of Papua. Solomon Islands lie to its east. It is the only country in the world to have poisonous birds. Its population density is 15 per square kilometre and its time zones are UTC + 10 and 11.

Papua New Guinea is the third largest island nation in the world. It has been ruled by three external powers since 1884, including 60 years of Australian administration starting during World War One. It became sovereign in 1975. The nation is a Commonwealth realm with the British monarch as its constitutional head.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 2500 dollars. It is richly endowed with natural resources, both mineral and renewable, such as forests, marine resources including a large stock of tuna fish, and agriculture. The rugged terrain including high mountain ranges and valleys, swamps and islands, and high cost of infrastructure, combined with law and order problems make it difficult for outside developers. Local development is hindered by corruption, poor transportation, illiteracy, poor health standards and paucity of funds.

Agriculture provides for 30 % of its GDP. Natural deposits including gold, copper and oil account for 72 % of the export earnings. Palm oil and coffee too are among major exports. Cocoa, coconut, tea and rubber are mostly produced by small landholders. The economy is growing by 4 % mainly due to strong prices, a booming mining sector and gas exploration which is still in construction phase for the time being. IMF and World Bank back its development. It is a member of Commonwealth, Pacific Community and Pacific Islands Forum. It is also an observer state in ASEAN.

PARAGUAY

Republic of Paraguay (Demonym: Paraguayan) with Capital: Asuncion has a Population: 6.2 million in an Area: 406,750. Its Languages are Spanish and Guarani and Religion: Christian 96%. Its Currency is Guarani.

Paraguay is a land-locked country in South America. It borders Argentina to the south and southwest; Brazil to the east and northeast; and Bolivia to the northwest. Nearly 2.3 million of its people live in Asuncion and its surrounding metro area. Although one of the only two landlocked countries in South America besides Bolivia,

Paraguay has ports on the Paraguay and Parana rivers that give exit to the Atlantic Ocean, through the Parana-Paraguay Waterways. The population density is 15. Its time is UTC-4. 87 % of its Christians are Catholic. The majority of the population is Mestizo and Guarani culture remains widely influential.

Spanish Conquistadors arrived in 1524 and established the city of Asuncion, the first capital of the Governorate of the Rio de la Plata. During the 17th century, Paraguay was the centre of Jesuit missions, where the native Guarani people were converted to Christianity and introduced to European culture. After the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spanish territories in 1767, Paraguay increasingly became a peripheral colony.

Following independence from Spain in the early 19th century, Paraguay was ruled by the series of authoritarian governments. This period ended with the disastrous Paraguayan War of 1864-1870. During this war, Paraguay lost half of its population and a third of its territory. In the 20th century, Paraguay faced another major international conflict, the Chaco War of 1932-1935 against Bolivia, in which Paraguay prevailed. The country came under a succession of military dictators, culminating in the 35 year regime of Alfredo Stroessner, which lasted until his overthrow in 1989 by an internal military coup. This marked the beginning of Paraguay's current democratic era.

Paraguay rates as the happiest place in the world as per polling data. Its GDP nominal is 47 billion dollars with a per capita value of 20,000 dollars, 7th in South America. It is a developing country and its HDI is 0.717, high, ranking 105th in the world. It is a founding member of Mercosur, UN, OAS, NAM and the Lima Group. The city of Lique, in metropolitan Asuncion, is the seat of the South American Football Federation.

PERU

Republic of Peru Demonym: Peruvian) with Capital: Lima has a Population: 35 million in an Area: 1,285,220. Its Languages are Spanish and Quechua and Religion: Christian 95%. Its Currency is Sol.

Peru is a country in western South America. It is bordered in the north by Ecuador and Colombia; in the east by Brazil; in the southeast by Bolivia, in the south by Chile, and in the south and west by the Pacific Ocean. The capital Lima is a port city. It is the 19th largest country in the world and the third largest in South America. The population density in Peru is 23 and time UTC-5.

Peru is a mega diverse country. Its habitats include the arid plains of the Pacific coastal regions in the west, the peaks of the Andes Mountains extending from the north to the southeast, and the tropical Amazon River Basin rainforest in the east.

Peruvian territory was home to several cultures during the ancient and medieval periods. It has one of the longest histories of civilisation in the world. It traces its heritage back to the 10th millennium BC. Notable pre-colonial cultures and civilisations include the Caral Supe Civilisation; the Nazca Culture; the Wari and Tiwanaku Empires; the Kingdom of Cusco, and the Inca Empire which is the largest known state in the pre-Columbian Americas. The Spanish Empire conquered the region in the 16th century and Charles 5 established viceroyalty with the official name of the Kingdom of Peru. It encompassed most of its South American territories, with its capital in Lima. Higher education started in the Americas with the official establishment of the National University of San Marcos in Lima in 1551.

Peru formally proclaimed independence from Spain in 1821, following the military campaigns of Jose de San Martin and Simon Bolivar, and the decisive battle of Ayacucho. Peru completed its independence in 1824. In the ensuing years, the country first suffered from political instability until a period of relative economic and political stability began due to the exploitation of guano that ended with the War of the Pacific in 1879-94. Throughout the 20th century, Peru grappled with political and social instability, including the internal conflict between the state and guerrilla groups, interspersed with periods of economic growth. Implementation of the Plan Verde shifted Peru towards neoliberal economics under the authoritarian rule of Alberto Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos in the 1990s. The former's political ideology of Fujimorism left a lasting imprint on the country's governance that continues to present day. The 2000s marked economic expansion and poverty reduction, but the subsequent decade revealed long existing socio-political vulnerabilities, exacerbated by Congress and the Covid-19 pandemic, precipitating the period of unrest beginning in 2022.

Peruvian population is a mixture of Mestizo; Amerindian; European, African and Asian groups. 60 % population is Mestizo, 26 % indigenous and 6 % white. Spanish is the main language, while Quechuan languages and Aymara are spoken by a significant part of the population. 76 % of the Christians adhere to Catholicism.

The sovereign state of Peru is a representative democratic republic. Its main economic activities are mining; manufacturing, agriculture and fishing, along with other growing sectors such as telecommunications and biotechnology. Its GDP nominal is 265 billion dollars with a per capita value of 7700 dollars. Its HDI is 0.762, medium

Peru forms part of the Pacific Pumas. This is a political and economic grouping of countries along Latin America's Pacific coast that share common trends of positive growth, stable macroeconomic foundations, improved governance and openness to

global integration. Peru ranks high in social freedom. It is an active member of the APEC, the Pacific Alliance, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the WTO. It is considered a middle power.

PHILIPPINES

Republic of the Philippines (Demony: Filipino) with Capital: Manila has a Population: 115 million in an Area: 300,000. Its Languages are Filipino and English and Religion: Christian 90%, Muslim 6%. Its Currency is Peso.

The Philippines is an archipelago country in Southeast Asia. It lies in the Western Pacific Ocean. It is bounded by South China Sea to the west; Philippine Sea to the east and Celebes Sea to the southwest. It shares maritime borders with Taiwan to the north, Japan to the northeast; Vietnam to the west; Palau to the east; and Malaysia and Indonesia to the south. The Philippines have 7461 islands. These are categorised into three main geographical divisions from north to south; Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The population density is 363 and time UTC + 8.

Its location as an island country on the Pacific Ring of Fire and close to the equator makes it prone to earthquakes and typhoons. The Philippines has a variety of natural resources and a globally significant level of biodiversity. 34 % of its people are Visayan and 24 % Tagalog. 80 % Christians are Catholic.

Negritos, the archipelago's earliest inhabitants, were followed by waves of Austronesian peoples. The adoption of Animism, Hinduism with Buddhist influence, and Islam established island-kingdoms ruled by datus, rajas and sultans. Overseas trade with neighbours such as the late Tang or Song Empire brought Sinitic speaking Sangley and Langlang merchants to the archipelago. They gradually settled in and intermixed. The arrival of Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer leading a fleet for Castile, marked the beginning of Spanish colonisation. In 1543, Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez named the archipelago Las Islas Filipinas in honour of King Phillip 2 of Castile. Spanish colonisation via New Spain beginning in 1565, led to the Philippines becoming ruled by the Crown of Castile, as part of the Spanish Empire., for more than 300 years. Catholic Christianity became the dominant religion, and Manila became the western hub of the trans-Pacific trade. Hispanic immigrants from Latin America and Iberia also selectively colonised. The Philippines Revolution began in 1896, and became entwined with the 1898 Spanish-American War. Spain ceded the territory to the United States, and Filipino revolutionaries declared the First Philippine Republic. The ensuing Philippine- American War ended with the US controlling the territory until the Japanese invasion of the islands during WW2. After the US retook the Philippines from the Japanese, the Philippines became independent in 1946. The

country has had a tumultuous experience with democracy, which included the overthrow of a decade-long dictatorship in a nonviolent revolution.

The Philippines is an emerging market and a newly industrialised country, whose economy is transitioning from agricultural to service and manufacturing centred. Its GDP nominal is 475 billion with a per capita value of 4100 dollars and HDI is high. It is a founding member of the UN, WTO, NAM, ASEAN, APEC and the East Asia Summit. It is a major non-NATO ally of the US.

POLAND

Republic of Poland (Demonym: Pole) with Capital: Warsaw has a Population of 38 million in an Area: 312679. Its Languages are Polish and Ukrainian and Religion: Christian 72%. Its Currency is Euro.

Poland is located in Central Europe. It borders Baltic Sea, Lithuania and a Russian exclave to the north; Belarus and Ukraine to the east; Slovakia and Czechia to the south and Germany to the west. It also shares maritime borders with Denmark and Sweden. Poland is the fifth most populous country in the EU. The capital Warsaw is its largest city. Its other major cities include Krakow, Lodz and Gdansk. Its territory traverses the Central European Plain, extending from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Sudets and Carpathian Mountains in the south. Its longest river is Vistula, and highest point Mount Rysy, situated in the Tatra Mountain Range of the Carpathians. Its population density is 122. 98 % of its population is Poles by ethnicity and 71 % Christians are Catholic. Its time is UTC +2.

Prehistoric human activity on Polish soil dates to the Lower Palaeolithic, with continuous settlement since the end of the Last Glacial Period. It was settled by tribal Polans after whom the country is named. The process of establishing proper statehood in Poland started in 966 and it coincided with conversion of a pagan Polish ruler to Christianity, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Kingdom of Poland emerged in 1025, and in 1569 cemented its long standing association with Lithuania, thus forming the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the time, the Commonwealth was one of the great powers of Europe, with a uniquely liberal political system which adopted Europe's first modern constitution in 1791.

With the passing of the prosperous Polish Golden Age, the country was partitioned by neighbouring states at the end of the 18th century. Poland regained its independence in 1918 as the Second Polish Republic and successfully defended it in the Polish Soviet War of 1919 to 1921. In 1939 the invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union marked the beginning of WW2 which resulted in millions of

Polish casualties. Forced into the Eastern bloc in the global Cold War, Poland was a founding signatory to the Warsaw pact. Through the emergence and contributions of the Solidarity Movement the communist government was dissolved and Poland re-established itself as a democratic state in 1989.

Poland is a developed market and high income economy. Its GDP nominal is 842 billion, 6th highest in the EU, with a per capita value of 23,000 dollars. Its HDI 0.876, very high. It has a high standard of living, economic freedom, university education and health care. It is a founding member state of UN and also a member of the WTO, OECD, NATO and EU Including the Schengen Area.

PORTUGAL

Portuguese Republic (Demonym: Portuguese) with Capital: Lisbon has a Population: 10.3 million in an Area: 92391. Its Language is Portuguese and Religion: Christian 85%, Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Euro.

Portugal is located on the Iberian Peninsula in South West Europe. It features the westernmost point in the continental Europe. Its mainland borders the North Atlantic in the west and south and Spain in the north and east. It has the longest uninterrupted border-line in the EU. The Portuguese territory also includes the Macronesian archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira. Both of these are autonomous regions with their own regional governments. In the mainland, Alentejo region occupies the biggest area but is one of the regions in Europe with a lower population density. Lisbon is the capital and the largest city by population. It is the main spot for tourists alongside Porto and Algarve.

One of the oldest countries in Europe, Portugal has continuously been settled and fought over since prehistoric times. The territory was inhabited by the Celtic and Iberian peoples. They had some commercial and cultural contact with Phoenicians, ancient Greeks and Carthaginians. It was later ruled by the Romans, followed by the invasions of the Germanic peoples together with the Alans, and later the Moors, who were eventually expelled during the Reconquistas. Founded first as a country within the Kingdom of Leon in 868, the country officially gained independence as the Kingdom of Portugal with the treaty of Zamora in 1143.

During the 15th and 16th centuries Portugal led the Age of Discovery and established one of the longest-lived maritime and commercial empires, becoming one of the main economic and political powers of the time. By the early 19th century, events such as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, the country's occupation during the Napoleonic Wars, and the resulting independence of Brazil in 1822 led to a marked decay of

Portugal's prior opulence. This was followed by the civil war between liberal constitutionalists and conservative absolutists over royal succession from 1828 to 1834. The 1910 revolution deposed Portugal's monarchy, and established the democratic but unstable Portuguese First Republic, later superseded by the authoritarian regimes of Ditadura Nacional (National Dictatorship) and Estado Novo (New State). Democracy was restored after the Carnation Revolution of 1974. This ended the Portuguese Colonial War and it lost its remaining colonial possessions.

Portugal's cultural, architectural and linguistic influence is visible in 250 million Portuguese speakers around the world. It is a developed country with an advanced economy, and big tourism and infrastructure industries. 93 % population is Portuguese and 7 % foreign. Population density is 114 and GDP nominal per capita 30,000 dollars. HDI is very high and time is UTC-1. A member of the UN, EU, Schengen Area and CoE, Portugal was one of the founding members of NATO, Eurozone, OECD, and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries.

QATAR

State of Qatar (Demonym: Qatari) Capital: Doha has a Population: 2.7 million in an Area: 11581. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 66%, Hindu 16%. Its Currency is Rial.

Qatar is a country in West Asia occupying the small Qatar Peninsula on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East. It has the sole disputed border with Saudi Arabia to the south. Rest of its territory is surrounded by the Persian Gulf. The Gulf of Bahrain, an inlet of the Persian Gulf separates Qatar from nearby Bahrain. Doha is home to 80 % of its inhabitants. The land area is mostly made up of flat low-lying desert. Its time is UTC + 3.

Qatar has been ruled as a hereditary monarchy by the House of Thani since Muhammad bin Thani signed an agreement, not a formal treaty with Britain in 1868 that recognised its separate status. Following Ottoman rule, Qatar became a British protectorate in 1916 and gained independence in 1971. The current emir is Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who holds nearly all executive, legislative, and judicial authority in autocratic manner under the Constitution of Qatar.

The population is 2.7 million, but only 313,000 of them are Qatari citizens, the remaining being expatriates. 40 % of its population is Arab and 43 % South Asian, including 22 % Indian, 13 % Bengali, 5 % Pakistani and 4 % Sri Lankan. Its population density is 176.

It is a high-income economy backed by the world's third largest gas reserves apart from plentiful oil deposits. It is one of the largest exporters of liquefied natural gas and the largest emitter of carbon dioxide per capita. Its GDP nominal is 235 billion dollars with a per capita value of 82,000 dollars. Qatar has the 4th highest GDP per capita in the world. Its HDI is very high. In the 21st century, Qatar emerged as both a major non-NATO ally of the US and a middle power in the Arab world. Its geopolitical power has risen through its media group, Al Jazeera Media Network and reported support to rebel groups financially during the Arab Spring. Qatar also forms part of the GCC.

ROMANIA

Republic of Romania (Demonym: Romanian) with Capital: Bucharest has a Population: 19 million in an Area: 238,398. Its Languages are Romanian and Hungarian and Religion: Christian 85%. Its Currency is Leu.

Romania is a country at crossroads of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It borders Ukraine to the north and east; Moldova to the east; Bulgaria to the south; Hungary to the west and Serbia to the southwest. Black Sea lies to its southeast. Europe's second longest river, the Danube, rises in Germany's Black Forest and flows southeast for almost 3000 kilometres before emptying into Romania's Danube delta. The Carpathian Mountains cross Romania from the north to the southwest and include Moldoveanu peak, at an elevation of 8346 feet. Its population density is 80 and time UTC +2.

Romania has a predominantly continental climate. It is the 12th largest country in Europe and the 6th most populous country in the EU. The capital Bucharest is the largest city in Romania; Constanta, Timisoara and Brasov are its other major cities. 90 % of its population is Romanian and 6 % Hungarian by ethnicity. 75 % of its Christians adhere to Orthodox Christianity and 6 % to Protestantism. Romania is a unitary semi-presidential republic. Its parliament comprises of a senate and a chamber of deputies.

Settlement in what is now Romania began in the Lower Palaeolithic followed by written records attesting the Kingdom of Dacia, its conquest, and subsequent Romanisation by the Roman Empire during late antiquity. The modern Romanian state was formed in 1859 through a personal union of the Danubian principalities of Moldova and Wallachia. The new state, officially named Romania since 1866, gained

independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877. During WW1, after declaring its neutrality in 1914, Romania fought together with the Allied Powers from 1916. In the aftermath of the war, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transylvania, and parts of Banat, Crisana and Maramures became part of the Kingdom of Romania. In 1940, as a consequence of the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact and Second Vienna Award, Romania was compelled to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union and Northern Transylvania to Hungary. In November 1940, Romania signed the Tripartite Pact and consequently, in June 1941 entered WW2 on the axis side fighting against the Soviet Union until August 1944, when it joined the Allies and recovered Northern Transylvania. Following the war and occupation by the red army, Romania became a socialist republic and a member of the Warsaw Pact. After the 1989 Revolution, Romania began a transition towards democracy and a market economy.

The majority of Romania's population are ethnic Romanians and religiously identify themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians speaking Romanian, a Romance language, more specifically Eastern Romance. It is a developed country, emerging as a middle power in international affairs.

Its economy ranks among the fastest growing in the EU, being the 44th largest in the world by nominal GDP of 380 billion dollars with a per capita figure of 45000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.821, very high.

Romania ranks relatively high in citizen happiness. It has the fastest and cheapest internet speeds in the world. Romania experienced rapid economic growth in the early 2000s. Its economy is now based predominantly on services. It is a producer and net exporter of cars and electric energy through companies like Automobile Dacia and OMY Petrom. Romania is a member of the UN, EU, NATO, the CoE, BSEC and WTO.

RUSSIA

Russian Federation (Demonym: Russian) with Capital: Moscow has a Population: 144 million in an Area: 17,075200. Its Languages are Russian, local dialects and Religion: Christian 61 %, Muslim 9 %. Its Currency is Ruble.

Russia is a transcontinental country in the Eastern Europe and the Northern Asia. It is the largest country in the world by area. It spans more than one eighth of the Earth's inhabited land area, stretching eleven time zones and bordering 14 sovereign nations. Its territory extends from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Black Sea and the Caucasus in the south. It borders North Korea, Mongolia and China to the south; Kazakhstan,

Georgia and Azerbaijan to the southwest; and Ukraine, Belarus and Poland to the west. It shares borders with Poland in its mainland as well as its Kaliningrad Oblast. It also has borders with Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Norway and Finland. It has maritime borders with Japan and the US state of Alaska. Its 11 time zones include UTC +2 to UTC + 12.

Most of Russia is vast stretches of plains with steppe to the south and forests to the north. Its northern coast is tundra. The 18510 feet high Mount Elbrus in Caucasus is the highest point in Russia. It is the most populous nation in Europe and the 9th most populous in the world. Russia possesses 10% of the world's arable land. It is home to 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Russia is a highly urbanised country consisting of 16 population centres with over a million inhabitants. Its capital as well as the largest city is Moscow. Saint Petersburg is Russia's second largest city and cultural capital.

The East Slavs emerged as a recognised group in Europe between the 3rd and 8th centuries CE. The first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus arose in the 9th century. In 988, it adopted Orthodox Christianity from the Byzantine Empire. Rus ultimately disintegrated, with the Grand Duchy of Moscow growing to become the Tsardom of Russia. By the early 18th century, Russia had vastly expanded through conquest, annexation, and the efforts of Russian explorers. It developed into the Russian Empire, which remains the third-largest empire in history.

With the Russian Revolution in 1917, the monarchic rule was abolished and eventually replaced by the Russian SFSR, the world's first constitutionally socialist state. Following the Russian Civil War, the Russian SFSR established the Soviet Union with three other socialist republics, within which it was the largest and principal constituent. At the expense of millions of lives, the Soviet Union underwent rapid industrialisation in the 1930s and later played a decisive role for the Allies in WW2 by leading large-scale efforts on the Eastern Front.

With the onset of the Cold War, it competed with the US for global ideological influence. The Soviet era of the 20th century saw some of the most significant Russian technological achievements, including the first human-made satellite and the first expedition into outer space.

In 1991, the Russian SFSR emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the independent Russian Federation. A new constitution was adopted, which established federal semi-presidential system. Since the turn of the century, Russia's political system has been dominated by Vladimir Putin, under whom the country has experienced democratic backsliding and a shift towards authoritarianism. Russia has been militarily involved in a number of conflicts in former Soviet states and other countries, including its war with Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014 from neighbouring Ukraine, followed by further annexation of four other regions in 2022 during an on-going invasion. Internationally it ranks among the lowest in

measurements of democracy, human rights and freedom of the press. The country also has high levels of perceived corruption.

Its advanced economy is the 11th largest in the world. Its mineral and energy resources are the largest in the world and it is among leaders in producing gas and oil. Its technological advances include its lead in reaching outer space. It possesses the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons. More than 90% of the world total of 14000 are owned by the US and Russia. It has the second largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines and the largest tank force in the world. It possesses a large and fully indigenous arms industry producing most of its own military equipment and has 30% of worldwide weapon sales. It has the third highest military expenditure in the world.

72 % of its population is Russian, 3 % Tatar, and 1 % each Bashkir and Chechen. 60 % Christians are Russian Orthodox. Its population density is 8.4, ranking 187th in the world. Its GDP PPP is 5.5 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 38,200 dollars. Its GDP nominal is 2 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 14,400 dollars. Its Gini is 36, medium and HDI 0.821, very high. It is a permanent member of UNSC, a member of G20, SCO, BRICS APEC, and OSCE WTO. It is a leading member of post-Soviet organisations such as CIS, CSTO and EAEU/EEU.

RWANDA

Republic of Rwanda (Demonym: Rwandan) with Capital: Kigali has a Population: 12.5 million in an Area: 26338. Its Languages are Kinyarwanda, French, English and Religion: Christian 93%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Franc.

Rwanda is a landlocked country in the Great Rift Valley. African Great Lakes and East Africa converge at this location. It has borders with Uganda to the north; Tanzania to the southeast, Burundi to the south and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. Its time is UTC +2.

Rwandans are drawn from Banjarwanda as the main cultural and linguistic group. The tribes namely Hutu, Tutsi and Twa peoples have lived in the present day Burundi Rwanda region for at least 500 years. For more than 200 of these it was an independent area. Hutu are 84 % of the population; Tutsi close to 15% and Twa 1%. Twa are a forest dwelling pygmies. The male are less than 4 feet 11 inches tall midgets. They are healthy and have children. The Kingdom of Burundi or Urundi emerged on the eastern foothills in the 16th century. It annexed small neighbours including Rwanda and expanded. The ruler was a traditional monarch with several princes. Succession struggles among the royalty were common. By the mid-18th century the Tutsi royalty consolidated authority.

Since 1884, German East Africa Company had been active in the African Great Lakes region. Meanwhile, the British Empire and the Sultanate of Zanzibar started to dominate in some parts of the region. To counter them, the German Company called in the German Empire for help. Germans started to gain control in the region broadly termed as German East Africa. It included Urundi, Ruanda and mainland Tanzania (Tanganyika) in 1880s. Gitega served as the administrative centre for Ruanda-Urundi region. During the First World War, the German power to hold the region diluted. Under Versailles Treaty, Germany ceded most of the territory to Belgium in 1914. In 1916 coordinated British and Belgian attacks made Germans retreat. Rwanda achieved independence in 1962.

Two bouts of ethnic cleansing in Rwanda left a million people dead in 1970s and 1990s. The Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both Hutus, died together in an aeroplane shot down in April 2014.

Rwanda lies a few degrees south of the equator. It is highly elevated with mountains in the west; savannah in the east, and numerous lakes throughout the country. Its climate is temperate to sub-tropical, with two each of dry and rainy seasons. It is the most densely populated mainland African country. Its population density is 517. Its GDP nominal per capita is 1000 dollars and HDI is low. Its legislative includes Senate and National Assembly. The population is young and rural. Rwanda is a member of the African Union, the Common Market for East and South Africa, the UNO, and NAM.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis (Demonym: Kittian, Nevisian) with Capital: Basseterre has a Population: 60,000 in an Area: 261. Its Language is English and Religion: Christian 95%. Its Currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

It is in West Indies, a part of the Leeward Island chain of the Lesser Antilles. It has Anguilla to the north; Antigua and Barbuda to the north east and Montserrat to the south east. Its time is UTC-4.

Saint Kitts and Nevis gained independence from Britain in 1983. It is a Commonwealth realm with the British monarch as its head of the state. It is the smallest sovereign state in the Western Hemisphere both in area and population. Being among the first islands to be colonised by Europeans including British and French in the Caribbean, it is called the "Mother Colony of the West Indies". Nevis Island is 3 kilometres south east of St Kitts across a shallow channel called The Narrow.

Its population density is 164, GDP nominal per capita 18,000 dollars and HDI very high.

The capital is located on Saint Kitts and is the main port for passenger entry. The British dependency of Anguilla was historically a part of the union but chose to stay as a British overseas territory.

SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia (Demonym: Saint Lucian) with Capital: Castries has a Population: 180,000 in an Area: 616. Its Languages are English and French and Religion: Christian 91%. Its Currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

Saint Lucia is situated in the West Indies. It lies in East Caribbean Sea on the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. It is part of the Lesser Antilles. It has Saint Vincent to the south, Barbados to the south east and the British overseas territory Martinique to the north. Saint Lucia is a volcanic island and has a number of small islands.

French were the first European settlers in 1660. British came in, defeated the French and remained in control from 1663 to 1667. As many as 14 wars were fought between the two colonists and it was ruled 7 times by each. In 1814 British took definitive control. Due to switching control, the state was called Helen of the West Indies. This was after the Greek mythology character Helen of Troy, also called Helen of Sparta. Being the most beautiful world woman, she was married to Menelaus of Sparta but was abducted by Theseus. Her possession was the cause behind the Trojan War.

Saint Lucia had the first representative government in 1840. From 1958 to 1962, it was member of the West Indies foundation. In 1979, it became an independent state. It is a Commonwealth realm as well as a member of La Francophonie. 85% of the population is black.

Saint Lucia has educated work force; efficient road network and communications; and water supply, sewerage and port facilities. Shipment and banking are its major sources of earning. Its per capita income is 15,225 US dollars. Banana industry is another source of income. Competition in this industry from Latin American countries adversely affected the exports. Economy was diversified and banana industry revitalised. Services sector accounts for 83% of GDP, industry for 13 % and

agriculture 2%. Its currency is East Caribbean Dollar shared with Antigua and Barbuda; Dominica; Grenada; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. It is also shared with two British overseas territories namely Montserrat and Anguilla.

SAINT VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Demony: Vincy) with Capital: Kingstown has a Population: 100,000 in an Area: 389. Its Languages are English and French and Religion: Christian 89%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

The island nation Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also referred to as simply Saint Vincent for brevity. It lies in eastern part of the Caribbean Sea where it meets the Atlantic Ocean. Saint Vincent falls in Lesser Antilles. While the bigger islands like Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola in the north Caribbean form Greater Antilles, the smaller ones in its east and south east arc make Lesser Antilles. The southern part of Lesser Antilles is included in Windward Islands and the northern half in Leeward Islands. Saint Vincent is included in the former part. Saint Vincent has Saint Lucia to the north, Barbados to the east and Grenada to the south. Grenadines has 20 odd islands. Only 8 of them are inhabited. The capital is also a port city. The nation is a former British colony and is a Commonwealth realm. 66% of its population is black. It is a densely populated country with a density of 300 persons. Its economy is based on banana industry and tourism and its per capita income is 8000 dollars.

SAMOA

Independent State of Samoa (Demony: Samoan) with Capital: Apia has a Population: 200,000 in an Area: 2944. Its Languages are English and Samoan and Religion: Christian 97%. Its Currency is Tala.

Samoa is located 64 Kilometres west of American Samoa. It is northeast of Tonga and Fiji and southeast of Tuvalu. It lies south of the Equator about halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand in the Polynesian region of the Pacific.

Samoa consists of two main islands, Sava and Upolu; two smaller islands that are inhabited and several smaller islands that are uninhabited. Its population density is 70 per square kilometre. 93 % of the population is Samoan by ethnicity

The Lapita people discovered and settled the islands some 3500 years ago. The region came under Germany in 1900 and fell to New Zealand in 1914. In 1946, it came under UN trusteeship and was admitted to it in 1976. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. It changed the name from Western Samoa to Samoa in 1997. Due to seafaring skills of Samoans pre-twentieth century, European explorers referred to the entire island group as the Navigator Islands. This is applicable to American Samoa as well. Samoa is a Christian country by constitution with reference to the Trinity. It is founded on God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 4400 dollars. The service sector accounts for 66 % of the GDP, industry for 24 % and agriculture for 10 %. Development aid, remittances from overseas workers and agricultural exports are the key factors of the economy. 90 % of its exports include coconut cream, coconut oil and copra.

SAN MARINO

Republic of San Marino (Demonym: San Marino) with Capital San Marino has a Population: 30,000 in an Area: 61. Its population density is 520. Its Language is Italian and its Religion is Christian 92%. Its Currency is Euro.

San Marino is also known as the Most Serene Republic of San Marino. It is a European microstate and country enclaved by Italy. Located on the northeastern side of the Appenine Mountains, San Marino is the fifth smallest country in the world.

San Marino is landlocked. However, its northeastern end is within ten kilometres of the Italian city of Rimini on the Adriatic coast. The capital is located atop Monte Titano. The country derives its name from Saint Marinus. He was a stonemason from the then Roman island of Rab in present day Croatia. Born in AD 275, Marinus participated in the rebuilding of Rimini's city walls after their destruction by Liburnian pirates. Marinus thus went on to found an independently ruled monastic community on Monte Titano in AD 301. Thus San Marino lays claim to being the oldest extant sovereign state, as well as the oldest constitutional republic. Its economy is mainly based on finance, industry, services, retail and tourism. It is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. its key industries include banking, electronics and ceramics. Its GDP nominal per capita is 60,000 dollars, the 9th highest in the world.

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE

Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (Demonym: Sao Tomean) with Capital: Sao Tome has a Population of 220,000 in an Area of 1001. Its Language is Portuguese and Religion: Christian 82%. Its Currency is Dobra.

It is an island country in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western coast of Central Africa. The capital Sao Tome is located at the equator and 7E longitude. It consists of two archipelagos around the two main islands of Sao Tome and Principe. These are 150 kilometres apart and 250 kilometres off the north-western coast of Gabon. Its population density is 200.

Sao Tome and Principe gained independence from Portugal in 1975. It is the second smallest and second least populous African sovereign state after Seychelles. The islands were uninhabited until their discovery in 1470 by Portuguese explorers Joao de Santarem and Pedro Escobar. Gradually colonised and settled throughout the 16th century, they collectively served as a vital commercial and trade centre for the Atlantic trade slave. The rich volcanic soil and proximity to the equator made the land ideal for sugar cultivation, followed later by cash crops such as coffee and cocoa. The lucrative plantation economy was heavily dependent on slaves. Cycles of social unrest and economic instability throughout the 19th and 20th century culminated in peaceful independence in 1975. Its economy is based on plantation agriculture. Cocoa represents 95 % of agricultural exports. Other export crops include copra, palm kernels, and coffee. 90 % food is imported. Other than agriculture, fishing and small industries are its main economic activities and tourism is being gradually developed. Its GDP nominal per capita is 3000 dollars. It is a founding member of the Community of Portuguese Languages Countries.

SAUDI ARABIA

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Demonym: Saudi) with Capital Riyadh has a Population of 34 million in an Area of 215, 0000. Its Language is Arabic and Religion: Muslim 94%, Christian 4%. Its Currency is Rial.

Hosting the Muslim holy cities of Makkah and Medina, Saudi Arabia is a country in West Asia and the Middle East, covering the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders Jordan and Iraq to the north; Kuwait to the northeast; Qatar and UAE to the east; Oman to the southeast and Yemen to the south. Bahrain is an island country off its east coast. The Gulf of Aqaba in the northeast separates it from Egypt and

Israel. It is the only country with a coastline along both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Most of its terrain consists of arid desert, lowland steppe and mountains. Its capital is also its largest city. It is the 5th largest country in Asia and the largest in the Middle East. Its time is UTC +3 and the population density a mere 15.

Pre-Islamic Arabia, the territory that constitutes modern-day Saudi Arabia, was the site of several ancient cultures and civilisations; the prehistory of Saudi Arabia shows some of the earliest traces of human activity outside Africa. Islam emerged in Saudi Arabia in the early 7th century and expanded to North Africa, Central and South Asia and Iberia in a matter of decades. The area of Saudi Arabia consists of Hejaz, Najd, Ahsa and Asir. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932. The ultraconservative Wahhabi religious school is a predominant feature of Saudi culture.

Petroleum was discovered in 1938 and Saudi Arabia is the third largest producer and the largest exporter of oil in the world. It has the world's second largest oil reserves accounting for 20 % of the world total. Its gas reserves are the 6th largest in the world. It is considered both a regional and middle power.

90% Saudi population is Arab and 10% Afro-Arab. 90% Muslims are Sunni and 10% Shia. It has a high income economy, which is the largest in the Middle East. Its nominal GDP of one trillion dollars is the 17th largest in the world, with a per capita value of 33,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high. It offers tuition free university education and universal healthcare to the citizens and there is no personal tax in the Kingdom. It is the third largest employer of foreign labour in the world and its population is among the youngest. Saudi Arabia is involved in Yemeni Civil War and that is taking toll on its resources.

Saudi Arabia is a member of the GCC, the UN, the OIC, the OPEC, Arab League and Arab Air Carriers Organisation. It is the only Arab country in G20 and is also a dialogue partner of the SCO.

SENEGAL

Republic of Senegal (Demonym: Senegalese) with Capital: Dakar has a Population: 18 million in an Area: 196,722. Its Languages are French and Wolof and Religion: Muslim 96%, Christian 4%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Senegal is the westernmost country of the mainland of the Old World, or Afro-Eurasia. It owes its name to the Senegal River, which borders it to the north and east. It is bordered by Mauritania to the north; Mali to the east; Guinea to the south east; Guinea Bissau to the south west and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Senegal nearly surrounds Gambia, a country occupying a narrow strip of land along the banks of

the Gambia River, which separates Senegal's southern region of Casamance from the rest of the country. Senegal also shares a maritime border with Cape Verde. Its population density is 100. 40 % of its people are Wolof and 29% Fula.

Senegal climate is typically Sahelian, though there is a rainy season. The state is a unitary presidential republic. Since its foundation in 1960, it has been recognised as one of the most stable countries on the African continent. It is ranked 52nd in electoral democracy in the world and 4th in Africa.

The state was formed as part of the independence of French West Africa from French colonial rule. Senegal is classified as a heavily indebted poor country, with a relatively low ranking on HDI. Most of the population lives on the coast and works in agriculture or other food industries. Other major industries include mining, tourism, and services. The country does not have notable natural resources, but the basis of its development lies in education, where almost half the state's budget is spent. GDP nominal is 31 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1700 dollars.

Senegal to French Guiana can provide a relatively shorter route between Africa and South America. It is a member state of the UN, AU, ECOWAS, OIC, Community of Sahel-Saharan States and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. In the world of sports, Senegal is known for the Paris-Dakar Rally.

SERBIA

Republic of Serbia (Demonym: Serb) with Capital: Belgrade has a Population: 7 million in an Area: 88,499. Its Languages are Serbian and Albanian and Religion: Christian 87%, Muslim 4%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Serbia, officially the Republic of Serbia, is a landlocked country at the crossroads of Southeast and Central Europe, located in the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain. It borders Hungary to the north; Romania to the northeast, Bulgaria to the southeast, North Macedonia to the south, Croatia and Bosnia to the west and Montenegro to the southwest. Serbia also claims a border with Albania through the disputed territory of Kosovo. Its time is UTC + 1. Its capital is also its largest city. Population density in Serbia is 86. 85 % of its population is Serb and 3 % Hungarian. 81 % Christians are Serbian Orthodox. Its government is unitary presidential republic.

Continuously inhabited since the Palaeolithic Age, the territory of modern day Serbia faced Slavic migrations in the 6th century, establishing several regional states in the early Middle Ages, at times recognised as tributaries to the Byzantine, Frankish and Hungarian kingdoms. The Serbian kingdom obtained recognition by the Holy See and Constantinople in 1217, reaching its territorial apex in 1346 as the Serbian

Empire. By the mid-16th century, the Ottomans annexed the entirety of modern day Serbia; their rule was at times interrupted by the Habsburg Empire, which began expanding towards Central Serbia from the end of the 17th century while maintaining a foothold in Vojvodina. In the early 19th century, the Serbian Revolution established the nation state as the region's first constitutional monarchy, which subsequently expanded its territory. In 1918, in the aftermath of World War 1, the Kingdom of Serbia united with the former Habsburg crown land of Vojvodina; later in the same year, it joined with other South Slavic nations in the foundation of Yugoslavia, which existed in various political formations until the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. During the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia formed a union with Montenegro, which was peacefully dissolved in 2006, restoring Serbia's independence as a sovereign state for the first time since 1918. In 2008, representatives of the Assembly of Kosovo unilaterally declared independence, with mixed responses from the international community while Serbia continues to claim it as part of its own sovereign territory.

Serbia adheres to military neutrality. It provides universal healthcare and free primary and secondary education to its citizens.

Serbia has a middle income market economy that is emerging. Its GDP nominal is 75 billion with a per capita value of 11,000 dollars and its HDI is rated very high. Services account for 58 % of the GDP. The economy has been affected by the global economic crisis. The public debt has doubled. 40 billion dollars have been attracted in foreign investment. Blue chip corporations make the investment. In the energy sector, Russia has made large investments. In metallurgy, Chinese steel and copper giants have acquired key complexes.

Imports exceed exports by 25 %. Serbia has free trade agreements with EFTA and CEFTA, a preferential trade regime with the EU, a Generalised System of Preferences with the USA, and individual free trade agreements with Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Turkey.

Serbia has favourable conditions for agriculture. Agricultural exports make one fifth of all Serbian sales on the world market. It is one of the largest providers of frozen fruit to the EU, largest to France and second largest to Germany. 70 % production is crops and 30 % livestock. It is the second largest producer of plums and raspberries and a significant producer of maize.

Main industrial sectors include automotive, mining nonferrous metals, food processing, electronics, pharmaceuticals and clothes. Automotive exports amount to 2 billion dollars. Serbia is a leading producer of steel and its mining industry is strong. It is the 18th largest producer of coal and 23rd largest of copper in the world. Serbia notably manufactures Intel smartphones named Tesla. Pepsi, coca cola and nestle food products are also made in Serbia.

It is a member of the UN; CoE; OSCE; PIP; BSEC and CEFTA; and is acceding to the WTO. Since 2014, the country has been negotiating its EU accession, with the possibility of joining it by 2030.

SEYCHELLES

Republic of Seychelles (Demony: Seychellois) with Capital: Victoria has a Population: 106,000 in an Area: 456. Its Languages are English and French and Religion: Christian 94%, Hindu 2%. Its Currency is Rupee.

Seychelles is an island country and archipelago state consisting of 115 islands in Indian Ocean. Its capital and the largest city, Victoria, is 1500 kilometres east of mainland Africa. Nearby island countries and territories include the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the French overseas departments of Mayotte and Reunion to the south; and Maldives and the Chagos Archipelago, administered by the US as British Indian Ocean Territory to the east. Seychelles is the smallest country in Africa as well as the least populated sovereign African country. Seychelles is nearest to Somalia in mainland Africa. Its population density is 262 and time UTC+4.

Seychelles was uninhabited prior to being encountered by Europeans in the 16th century. It faced competing French and British interests until it came under full British control in the late 18th century. It proclaimed independence from the UK in 1976. Seychelles culture is a mix of French, British and African influences.

It has developed from a largely agricultural society to a market-based diversified economy, characterised by service, public sector, and tourism activities. From 1976 to 2015, its nominal GDP grew nearly 700 % which currently stands at 2 billion dollars with a per capita value of 21,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high. It has the best per capita nominal GDP, HDI and democracy in Africa. Since 2010, the government has taken steps to encourage foreign investment. It is a member of the UN, AU, Southern African Development Community and the Commonwealth of Nations.

SIERRA LEONE

Republic of Sierra Leone (Demony: Sierra Leonean) with Capital: Freetown has a Population: 8 million in an Area: 71740. Its major Languages are English and Mende and Religion: Muslim 79%, Christian 21%. Its Currency is Leone.

Sierra Leone is informally called Salone at times. It is on southwest coast of West Africa in the Gulf of Guinea. It has Guinea to the north and west, and Liberia to the southeast. Its population density is 112 and time UTC itself.

It came under British control in 1808 and won independence in 1961. It is included among countries with most religious tolerance in the region. It started as a parliamentary democracy. In 1970s an attempt to one party presidential system led to a long civil war. It reverted to democracy in 1998 and is relatively stable at present. Its ethnic groups include 35 % Mende, and 33 % Temne.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 400 dollars and HDI low. It relies on mining especially of diamonds for economic base. It has vast deposits of rutile which is an oxide of titanium. Sierra Leone is among the largest producers of titanium and bauxite and is a major producer of gold. It is home to the 3rd largest natural harbour in the world. Despite all this, 53% of its population lives in poverty.

SINGAPORE

Republic of Singapore (Demony: Singaporean) with Capital: Singapore has a Population: 6 million in an Area: 697. Its Languages are Chinese and Malay and Religion: Buddhist 34%, Christian 18%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Singapore is an island country and city state in maritime South East Asia. It lies one degree north of the Equator off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, bordering the Strait of Malacca to the west, the Singapore Strait to the south, the South China Sea to the east, and the Straits of Johor to the north.

The country's territory comprises one main island, 63 satellite islands and islets and one outlying islet. The combined area of these has increased by 25 % since independence of Singapore as a result of extensive reclamation projects.

With its population density of 8000 per square kilometre, Singapore is the second densest country in the world after Monaco which has a population density of 20,000 per square kilometre. Still there are numerous green and recreational spaces as a result of urban planning. With a multicultural population and in recognition of the cultural identities of the major cultural groups within the nation, Singapore has four official languages; English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. English is the lingua franca, with its exclusive use in numerous public services. Multi-racism is enshrined in the

constitution and continues to shape national policies in education, housing and politics. 75 % of the population is Chinese by ethnicity, 14 % Malay, 9 % Indian and remaining percentage mixed.

As part of Malaysia, Singapore achieved independence from the UK in 1959. It became an independent nation in 1965.

With the 3rd highest GDP nominal per capita of 133,000 dollars in the world Singapore has a highly developed market economy, based historically on extended entrecote trade. Along with Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, Singapore is one of the four Asian tigers. High growth rates transformed living standards of the population. It attracts a large amount of foreign investment as a result of its location, skilled workforce, low tax rates and no corruption. The city is a popular location for conferences and events. It has the 11th largest foreign reserves in the world. It is also the most expensive city in the world. Public transport, utility bills and laptops are rebated for the citizens.

SLOVAKIA

Slovak Republic (Demonym: Slovak) with Capital: Bratislava has a Population: 5.5 million in an Area: 49,000. Its Languages are Slovak and Hungarian and Religion: Christian 69%. Its Currency is Euro.

Slovakia is a landlocked country in central Europe. It is bordered by Poland to the north; Ukraine to the east; Hungary to the south; Austria to the west and the Czech Republic to the northwest. The capital is its largest city followed by Kosice. 84 % population is Slovak and 8 % Hungarian. 60 % Christians are Catholic. The population density is 111. Time is UTC + 1.

The Slavs arrived in the territory of the present day Slovakia in the 5th and 6th centuries. From the late 6th century, parts of modern Slovakia were incorporated in the Avar Khaganate. In the 7th century, the Slavs played a significant role in the creation of Samo's Empire. In the 9th century, the Avar Khaganate dissolved, and the Slavs established the Principality of Nitra, which was later conquered by the Principality of Moravia. In the 10th century, after the dissolution of Moravia, the territory was integrated into the Kingdom of Hungary in 1000. In 1241 and 1242, after the Mongol invasion of Europe, much of the territory was destroyed, but was recovered largely, thanks to Bela 4.

After the First World War and the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire, the state of Czechoslovakia was established incorporating Slovakia. In the lead up to the Second World War, local fascist parties gradually came to power in the Slovak lands,

and the first Slovak Republic was established as a puppet state under the control of Nazi Germany. Opposition to the occupation culminated in the Slovak National Uprising. Despite setbacks, the resistance continued, and Czechoslovakia independence was re-established after the country's liberation at the end of the war.

Following the Soviet backed coup of 1948, Czechoslovakia became a communist state within the Eastern bloc and a satellite state of the Soviet Union. Attempts to liberalise communism culminated in the Prague Spring, which was suppressed by the War Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution peacefully ended Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Slovakia became an independent state in 1993 after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, sometimes known as the Velvet Divorce.

Slovakia is a developed country, with an advanced high income economy. A combination of a market economy with a comprehensive social security system leads to providing citizens with universal health care, free education, and one of the longest paid parental leaves in the OECD. Slovakia is a member of the EU, the Eurozone, the Schengen Area, the UN, NATO, CERN, the OECD, the WTO, the CoE, the Visegrad Group, and the OSCE. Slovakia is home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As the world's largest per capita car producer, Slovakia manufactures a million cars per year, representing 43% of its total industrial output. Its GDP nominal is 133 billion dollars with a per capita value of 25,000 dollars. HDI is 0.848, very high.

SLOVENIA

Republic of Slovenia (Demonym: Slovenian) with Capital: Ljubljana has a Population: 2.1 million in an Area: 20273. Its Language is Slovene and Religion: Christian 78%, Muslim 4%. Its Currency is Euro.

Slovenia is a country in southern Central Europe. It borders Italy to the southwest; Austria to the north; Hungary to the northeast and Croatia to the south and southeast. It has a short coastline on the Adriatic Sea to the southwest. The country is mostly mountainous and forested. It has a predominantly temperate continental climate with the exception of the Slovene Littoral and the Julian Alps. A sub-Mediterranean climate reaches to the northern extensions of the Dinaric Alps that traverse the country in a northwest to southeast direction. The Julian Alps in the northwest have an alpine climate, while towards the northeastern Pannonian Basin, a continental climate is more pronounced. The capital is situated near centre of the country. Its population density is 103 and the time UTC + 1.

Slovenia has historically been at the crossroads of Slavic, Germanic and Romance cultures and its territory has been part of many different states till its independence. State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was established in 1918 and Slovene National Liberation Committee in 1944. It became a part of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1944 and gained independence from it in 1991. Slovene, a South Slavic language, is the official language in Slovenia, while Italian and Hungarian are recognised as its regional languages. It was ranked 33rd in the Global Innovation Index in 2023. Slovenes constitute over 80 % of the population. There are 1 to 2 % each of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. 73 % Christians are Catholic while 4 % are Orthodox. The government is unitary parliamentary republic.

Its GDP nominal is 68 billion dollars with a per capita figure of 32,000 dollars. It is a developed country, with a high income economy ranking highly in HDI. Income inequality in Slovenia is very low. It joined the EU in 2004 and is a part of the Eurozone and the Schengen Area. It is also a member of the UN, the OSCE, the OECD, the Council of Europe and NATO.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Monarchy (Demony: Solomon Islander) with Capital: Honiara has a Population: 700,000 in an Area: 28459. Its Languages are English and Melanesian pidgin and Religion: Christian 97%. Its Currency is Solomon Island Dollar.

Solomon Islands are a nation state consisting of six major islands and over 900 smaller islands in Melanesia sub-region of Oceania. The islands lie northeast of Australia, east of Papua New Guinea; northwest of Vanuatu; west of Fiji and Tuvalu; and south of Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia. Its population density is 24 and time UTC+11. 96 % of the population is Melanesian.

Solomon Islands have been settled since 30,000 BC. Among Europeans, Spanish were the first to visit the region in 1568. Britain defined its area of interest in the islands in 1893 making them a British protectorate. During the Second World War, there was a fierce fighting between the US, Britain and Japan in the islands. Independence from Britain was achieved in 1978. It is a Commonwealth realm and the British monarch is its constitutional head represented by a governor general.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 2200 dollars. Its HDI is medium. It is among the least developed world countries. 75 % of its population is engaged in subsistence agriculture and fishing. It imports most manufactured goods and petroleum and receives donations from Australia, New Zealand, EU, Japan and Taiwan.

SOMALIA

Federal Republic of Somalia (Demonym: Somali) with Capital: Mogadishu has a Population: 26 million in an Area: 637,657. Its Languages are Somali and Arabic and Religion: Muslim 100%. Its Currency is Shilling.

Somalia is the easternmost country in Continental Africa. It is situated on the Horn of Africa and is bordered by Ethiopia to the west; Djibouti to the northwest; the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east and Kenya to the southwest. Somalia has the largest coastline on the African mainland. Its terrain consists mainly of plateaus, plains, and highlands. The capital Mogadishu is a port city. It is the largest city and lies in southern part of the country.

Somalia has been described as Africa's most homogenous country. 95 % residents are ethnic Somalis who have historically inhabited the country's north. Ethnic minorities are largely concentrated in the south. Majority population is Sunni Muslim. Its population density is 27 and time is UTC + 3.

In antiquity, Somalia was an important commercial centre. It is among the most probable locations of the ancient Punt. During the Middle Age, several powerful Somali empires dominated the regional trade, including the imamate of Awsame, Ajuran Sultanate, the Adal Sultanate, and the Sultanate of the Geledi.

In the late 19th century, the Somali sultanates were colonised by both the Italian and British empires and merged the tribal territories into Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland. Meanwhile in the interior, the Dervishes led by Muhammad Abdullah Hassan engaged in a two-decade confrontation against Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland, and were defeated in the 1920 Somaliland Campaign. Italy acquired full control of the northeastern, central and southern parts. In 1960, the two territories united to form the independent Somali Republic. It started with a civilian government. Said Barre of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) seized power in 1969 and brutally attempted to quash the War of Independence in the north. The SRC collapsed in 1991 with the onset of the Somali Civil War.

Most regions have returned to customary and religious law. In 2004, Transitional Federal Government was formed which re-established the Armed Forces. In 2006, with a US-backed Ethiopian Intervention, the Government assumed control of the south from the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU splattered into the radical groups including the jihadist group Al Shabab and battled for control of the territory. Insurgents control much of the central and southern Somalia while Jillib is the de facto capital for the insurgents.

Somalia is among the least developed countries in the world, as evidenced by its GDP per capita, HDI and the Fragile States Index. The informal economy is dependent on livestock, remittances from Somalis working abroad, and telecommunications. Its GDP is 11 billion dollars with a per capita value of 700 dollars. HDI is low. It is a member of the UN, the Arab League, AU, NAM, Eastern African Community and the OIC.

SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa (Demonym: South African) with Capital: Pretoria has a Population: 62 million in an Area: 1221,037. Its Languages are Afrikaans and English and Religion: Christian 78%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Rand.

South Africa is the southernmost country in Africa and the Old World. It is bounded to the south by 2800 kilometre coastline stretching along South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It has Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the north, and Mozambique and Eswatini to the east and northeast. It also completely enclaves the micro- state of Lesotho. It is the second most populous country located entirely south of the equator after Tanzania and the 23rd most populous country in the world. Pretoria is the administrative capital, while Cape Town is the legislative capital and Bloemfontein, the judicial capital. Its largest city is Johannesburg. Its population density is 50 and time UTC + 2.

84% population is black, 8% coloured, 7% white and 3% Asian. 60% Christians are Protestant. Zulu and Xhosa are the two most spoken languages, followed by Afrikaans and English. Regular elections have been held for almost a century. However, a vast majority were not enfranchised until 1994.

It is a newly industrialised country and has the most technologically advanced economy in Africa. However, crime, poverty and inequality remain widespread. There is 40 % unemployment and 60 % population lives below poverty line. The population density is 50 and GDP nominal 400 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 6500 dollars. Its HDI is high. South Africa is a middle power and a regional superpower in international affairs. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the G20.

SOUTH KOREA

Republic of Korea (Demonym: South Korean) with Capital: Seoul has a Population: 52 million in an Area: 100,413. Its Language is Korean and Religion: Buddhist 23%, Christian 30%. Its Currency is won.

Both North and South Korea have Yellow Sea to the west and Sea of Japan to the east. South Korea also has East China Sea to the south. The Korean Peninsula has neighbours like Japan, China and Russia. 60 % Korean males and females have Kim as their first name. 95% population is Korean. 28% people are Christian and 16% Buddhist. Population density is 507 and time UTC + 9.

The Korean Peninsula was inhabited as early as the Lower Palaeolithic period. Its first kingdom was noted in Chinese records in the early 7th century BC. Following the unification of Korea in the 7th century, Korea was ruled by the Goryeo and Joseon dynasties till 1897. The succeeding Korean Empire was annexed in 1910 into the Empire of Japan. This rule ended after WW2 and Korea was divided into northern and southern zones occupied by USSR and USA respectively. In 1950, North Korea invaded beginning the Korean War. This ended in 1953 with 3 million Koreans dead.

After revolutions, in 1963, the economy started to soar. Despite lack of natural resources, Korea was one of the four Asian tigers and is an advanced democracy. South Korea is a regional power and a developed country. Its armed forces are among the strongest. It is also renowned for its pop music and movies, called Korean Wave. It is a member of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, the G20, the IPEF, and the Paris Club. GDP nominal is 1.8 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 33,000 dollars. HDI is very high.

SOUTH SUDAN

Republic of South Sudan (Demonym: South Sudanese) with Capital: Juba has a Population: 12 million in an Area: 619,745. Its Language is English and Religion: Christian 60, Muslim 6%. Its Currency is Pound.

It is a landlocked country in eastern Central Africa. It borders Sudan to the north, Ethiopia to the east, Kenya to the southeast, Uganda to the south, the DRC to the southwest and the CAR to the west. It includes the vast swamp region of the Surd, formed by the White Nile and known locally as the Bahr al Jabal, meaning Mountain Sea. It depends on Sudan and Kenya for access to the Sea. Its population density is 13 and time UTC + 2.

The South Sudanese population is composed mostly of Nilotics peoples, and it is demographically among the youngest nations in the world, with roughly half under 18

years old. The majority of inhabitants adhere to Christianity or various indigenous faiths.

Sudan was occupied by Egypt under the Muhammad Ali dynasty and was governed as an Anglo-Egyptian condominium until Sudanese independence in 1956. Following the First Sudanese Civil War, the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region was formed in 1972 and lasted until 1983. A second Sudanese civil war soon broke out in 1983 and ended in 2005 with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Later that year, southern autonomy was restored when an Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan was formed. South Sudan won independence in 2011, following 99 % support in the January 2011 referendum.

South Sudan has suffered extreme ethnic violence, and endured a civil war characterised by rampant human rights abuses, including various ethnic massacres and killings of journalists by various parties to the conflict from 2013 until 2020 when competing combat leaders struck a unity deal and formed a coalition government, paving the way for refugees to return home.

It ranks last in HDI and per capita GDP. Only Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Burundi are poorer than South Sudan. GDP nominal is 5 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 325 and HDI is low. It is a member of the UN, the AU, the East African Community, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

SPAIN

Kingdom of Spain (Demonym: Spaniard) with Capital: Madrid has a Population: 49 million in an Area: 505,994. Its Languages are Spanish and Catalan and Religion: Christian 79%, Muslim 2%. Its Currency is Euro.

Spain is a country located in South-western Europe, with parts of the territory in the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and Africa across Strait of Gibraltar. It is the largest country in Southern Europe and the 4th most populous country in the EU. Spanning across the majority of the Iberian Peninsula, its territory also includes the Canary Islands in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa and the Balearic islands in the Mediterranean. The African enclaves of Ceuta, Melila and Penon Gomera make Spain the only European country to have physical borders with an African country, Morocco. 87 % population is Spanish and 56 % people are Roman Catholic. Population density is 94 and time zone is UTC.

Peninsular Spain is bordered to the north by France, Andorra, and the Bay of Biscay; to the east and south by the Mediterranean Sea and the British territory of Gibraltar and to the west by Portugal and the Atlantic Ocean. Spain's capital and the largest

city is Madrid. Other major cities and urban areas include Barcelona, Valencia, Zaragoza, Seville, Malaga, Murcia, Palma de Mallorca, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and Bilbao.

In early antiquity, the Iberian Peninsula was inhabited by Celtic and Iberian tribes, along with other local pre-Roman peoples. With the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the province of Hispania was established. Following the Romanisation and Christianisation of Hispania, the fall of the Western Roman Empire ushered in the inward migration of tribes from Central Europe including the Visigoths who formed the Visigothic Kingdom centred on Toledo. In the early 8th century, most of the peninsula was conquered by the Umayyad Caliphate, and during the early Islamic rule, Al-Andalusia became a dominant peninsular power centred in Cordoba. Several Christian kingdoms emerged in Northern Iberia including Asturias, Leon, Castile, Aragon, Navarre and Portugal. They made an intermittent southward military expansion and repopulation, known as the Reconquista. They repelled Islamic rule in Iberia, which culminated with the Christian seizure of the Nasrid Kingdom of Grenada in 1492. The dynastic union of the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon in 1479 under the Catholic Monarchs is often considered the de facto unification of Spain as a nation state.

Spain led the age of discovery, in which it pioneered the exploration and colonisation of the New World, made the first circumnavigation of the globe, and formed one of the largest empires in history. The Spanish Empire eventually reached a global scale spreading across all continents. This led to the rise of a global trading system fuelled primarily by precious metals.

The 18th century was marked by extensive reforms and, notably, the Bourbon reforms. The Decrees put an end to the existence of the Crown of Aragon as a separate entity and incorporated it into the Crown of Castile, thus abolishing the political differences of the two crowns and essentially establishing the Kingdom of Spain as a French-style monarchy and a centralised state in the pre-liberal sense.

In the 19th century, after the Napoleonic occupation and the victorious Spanish War of Independence, the following political divisions between liberals and absolutists led to the breakaway of most of the American colonies. The divisions finally converged in the 20th century with the Spanish Civil War, giving rise to the Francoist dictatorship that lasted until 1975. With the restoration of democracy and its entry into the EU, the country experienced an economic boom that profoundly transformed it socially and politically. Since the Siglo de Oro, Spanish art, architecture, music, poetry, painting, literature, and cuisine have been influential worldwide, particularly in Western Europe and the Americas.

Spain is one of the main nations of Latin Europe and a cultural superpower. As a reflection of its large cultural wealth, Spain is the world's second most visited country, has one of the world's largest number of World Heritage Sites, and is the most

popular destination for European students. Its cultural influence extends to over 600 million Hispanophones, making Spanish the world's second most spoken native language and the world's most widely spoken Romance language.

Spain is a secular parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy, with the King as the head of state. It is a major advanced capitalist economy, with the world's 15th largest economy by GDP, and 4th in Europe. Its GDP nominal is 1.6 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 33,000 dollars. Its HDI is 0.911, very high. It is a member of the UN, the EU, the Eurozone, NATO and a permanent guest of the G20. It is also a part of many other international organisations, such as the CoE; the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI); the Union for the Mediterranean; the OECD; the OSCE and the WTO.

SRI LANKA

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Demonym: Sri Lankan) with Capital: Colombo has a Population: 22 million in an Area: 65610. Its Languages are Sinhala, English and Religion: Buddhist 70 %, Hindu 13 %. Its Currency is Rupee.

Sri Lanka, historically known as Ceylon, is an island country in South Asia. It lies in the Indian Ocean, southwest of the Bay of Bengal. It is separated from the Indian Peninsula by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. It shares a maritime border with the Maldives in the southwest and India in the northwest. 75% of the people are Sinhalese, 11% Tamil and 9% Moor. 10 % people are Muslim and 7% Christian. The population density is 340 and time, UTC+ 5.30.

Its documented history goes back 3000 years, with evidence of prehistoric human settlements dating back to 125,000 years. The earliest known Buddhist writings known as the Pali canon, date to the fourth Buddhist council of 29 BC. Also called the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, or the Granary of the East, Sri Lanka's geographic location and deep harbours have made it of great strategic importance, from the earliest days of the ancient Silk Road trade route to today's so called maritime Silk Road. Because its location made it a major trading hub, it was already known to both East Asians and Europeans as long as the Anuradhapura period. During a period of great political crisis in the Kingdom of Kotte, the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka and sought to control its maritime trade, with a part of Sri Lanka subsequently becoming a Portuguese possession. After the Sinhalese-Portuguese war, the Dutch Empire and the Kingdom of Kandy took control of those areas. The Dutch possessions were then taken by the British, who later extended their control over the whole island, colonising it from 1815 to 1948. A national movement for political independence arose in the early 20th century, and in 1948, Ceylon became a dominion. It was succeeded by the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972. Its more recent history was marred

by a 26-year civil war from 1983 to 2009. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were finally defeated by the armed forces.

Sri Lanka is a developing country. It developed fast 'however the on-going economic crisis led to collapse of the currency, inflation and shortage of essentials. Its GDP nominal is 75 billion with a per capita value of 3300 dollars and its HDI is high. It is a member of the SAARC, the G77, the NAM, the UN and the Commonwealth of Nations.

SUDAN

Republic of the Sudan (Demonym: Sudanese) with Capital: Khartoum has a Population: 50 million in an Area: 1,886,068. Its Languages are Arabic, English and Religion: Muslim 91%, Christian 5%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Sudan is a country in northeast Africa. It borders Libya to the northwest; Egypt to the north; Red Sea and Eritrea to the northeast; Ethiopia to the southeast; South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, and Chad to the west. It had been the largest country by area both in Africa and the Arab League till 2011. The secession of South Sudan lowered it to the third rank in both positions. Now both titles are held by Algeria. The capital is also its most populous city. 70 % the population is Sudanese and 97% Sunni Muslim. The population density is 21 and time UTC +2.

Sudan means land of the black people. The area that is now Sudan witnessed the Khormusan, Haifan, and Sebilian and Qadan cultures from 40,000 BC to 5000 BC. It also saw A-Group culture, Kingdom of Karma, the Egyptian New Kingdom and the Kingdom of Kush up to 350 AD. After the fall of the Kush, the Nubians formed the three Christian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, most of Sudan was gradually settled by Arab nomads. From the 16th to 19th centuries, central and eastern Sudan was dominated by the Funj sultanate, while Darfur ruled the west and the Ottomans the east in 1811. Mamluks established a state at Dunqulah as a base for their slave trading. Under Turco-Egyptian rule of Sudan after the 1820s, the practice of trading slaves was entrenched along a north-south axis, with slave raids taking place in southern parts of the country and slaves being transported to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. From the 19th century, the entirety of Sudan was conquered by the Egyptians under the Muhammad Ali Dynasty. Religious-nationalist fervour erupted in the Mahdist Uprising in which Mahdist forces were eventually defeated by a joint Egyptian-British military force. In

1899, under British pressure, Egypt agreed to share sovereignty over Sudan as a condominium. In effect, Sudan was governed as a British possession. The Egyptian revolution of 1952 toppled the monarchy and demanded the withdrawal of British forces from all of Egypt and Sudan. Muhammad Naguib, one of the two co-leaders of the revolution, and Egypt's first president, who was half-Sudanese and had been raised in Sudan, made securing Sudanese independence a priority of the revolutionary government. The following year, under Egyptian and Sudanese pressure, the United Kingdom agreed to Egypt's demand for both governments to terminate their shared sovereignty over Sudan and to grant Sudan independence. On 1st January, 1956, Sudan was duly declared an independent state.

After independence, the Gaafar Numeiry regime began Islamist rule. This exacerbated the rift between the Islamic North, the seat of the government, and the Animists and Christians in the South. Differences in language, religion, and political power erupted into a civil war between the government forces, influenced by the National Islamic Front and the southern rebels, whose most influential faction was the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The conflict eventually led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Between 1989 and 2019, a 30-year long military dictatorship led by Omar al-Bashir ruled Sudan and committed widespread human rights abuses, including torture, persecution of minorities, alleged sponsorship of global terrorism, and ethnic genocide in Darfur from 2003 to 2020. Overall, the regime killed an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people. Protests erupted in 2018, demanding Bashir's resignation, which resulted in a coup in 2019 and Bashir's imprisonment. Sudan is currently embroiled in a civil war between two rival factions, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Islam was Sudan's state religion and Islamic laws were applied from 1983 until 2020 when the country became a secular state. Sudan is a least developed country and ranks 172nd on the HDI. Its economy largely relies on agriculture due to international sanctions and isolation, as well as a history of internal instability and factional violence. Most of its territory is dry and over 60 % of its population lives in poverty. Its GDP nominal is 25 billion dollars with a per capita value of 533 dollars. Its HDI is low and time UTC+2. Sudan is a member of the UN, the Arab League, the AU, the COMESA, the NAM and the OIC.

SURINAME

Republic of Suriname (Demonym: Surinamer) with Capital: Paramaribo has a Population: 632,000 in an Area: 163,820. Its Languages are Dutch and English and Religion: Christian 52 %, Hindu 19%. Its Currency is Guilder.

Suriname is a country in northern South America, sometimes considered part of the Caribbean and the West Indies. Situated slightly north of the equator, over 90 % of its territory is covered by rainforests, the highest proportion of forest cover in the world. Suriname is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north; French Guiana to the east; Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south. It is the smallest country in South America by both population and territory. The capital is the largest city and is home to roughly half of the population. 27 % of its population is Indian, 22% Maroon, 16% Creole and 14 % Javanese. 15 % of the population is Muslim. Its Population density is 4 and time UTC-3.

Suriname was inhabited as early as the fourth millennium BC by various indigenous peoples, including the Arawaks, Caribs, and Wayans. Europeans arrived in the 16th century, with the Dutch establishing control over much of the country's territory by the late 17th century. During the Dutch rule, Suriname was a lucrative source of sugar. Its plantation economy was initially driven by African slave labour. With the abolition of slavery in 1863, indentured servants were brought from Asia, predominantly from British India and the Dutch East Indies. In 1954, Suriname became a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1975, it achieved independence following negotiations with the Dutch government and it has close diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with the Netherlands.

Suriname's culture and society strongly reflect the legacy of the Dutch rule. It is the only sovereign nation outside Europe where Dutch is the official language spoken by 60 % of the population as a native language. Sranan Tongo, an English based creole language, is a widely used lingua franca. Most Surinamese are descendants of slaves and labourers brought from Africa and Asia by the Dutch. Suriname is highly diverse, with no ethnic group forming a majority. Its Muslim and Hindu populations are the largest in the Americas. Most people live along the northern coast, centred around Paramaribo, making Suriname one of the least densely populated countries on Earth. Suriname is a developing country with a high level of human development. Its economy is heavily dependent on its abundant natural resources including bauxite, gold, petroleum, and agricultural products. Its GDP nominal is 3.5 billion dollars with a per capita value of 5700 dollars and its HDI is medium. Suriname is a member of the CARICOM, the UN, and the OIC.

SWEDEN

Kingdom of Sweden (Demony: Swede) with Capital: Stockholm has a Population: 10.5 million in an Area: 450,295. Its Languages are Swedish and Finnish and Religion: Christian 67%, Muslim 5%. Its Currency is Krona.

Sweden is a Nordic country located on the Scandinavian Peninsula in Northern Europe. It borders Norway to the west and north, and Finland to the east. It is connected to Denmark in southwest by a bridge tunnel across the Oresund. Its population density is 26 and time UTC +1.

Sweden is the largest Nordic country and the 5th largest in Europe. 87 % Swedes reside in urban areas which cover 1.5 % of total area in the central and southern half of the country. Most people live near a major body of water. Nature in Sweden is dominated by forests and many lakes, including some of the largest in Europe. Many long rivers run from the Scandes range, primarily emptying into the northern tributaries of the Baltic Sea. Sweden has an extensive coastline. The country spreads across latitudes from 55N to 69N and thus has a significant length. Its climate is diverse. The capital is its largest city.

Sweden has been inhabited since 12,000 BC. The inhabitants emerged as the Geats and Swedes, which together constituted the sea peoples known as the Norsemen. A unified Swedish state emerged during the late 10th century. In 1397, Sweden joined Norway and Denmark to form the Scandinavian Kalmar Union. Sweden left the union in 1523. Sweden's involvement in the Thirty Years War on the Protestant side led to an expansion of its territories. The Swedish Empire was formed which remained one of the great powers of Europe until the 18th century. During this era, Sweden controlled much of the Baltic Sea. Most of the conquered territories outside the Scandinavian Peninsula were lost during the 18th and 19th centuries. The eastern half of Sweden, present-day Finland was lost to Imperial Russia in 1809. The last war in which Sweden was involved was in 1814, when Sweden by military means forced Norway into a personal union which lasted until 1905. Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy with legislative powers vested in the unicameral Riksdag.

Sweden is a highly developed country ranked seventh in the HDI. Its GDP nominal is 597 billion with a per capita value of 55,000 dollars and HDI is 0.952, very high. It maintains a Nordic social welfare system that provides universal healthcare and tertiary education for its citizens. It ranks very high in quality of life, economic competitiveness, income equality, gender equality, freedom and prosperity. It joined the EU in 1995 and is also a member of the UN, NATO, the Nordic Council, the Schengen AREA, the CoE, the WTO and the OECD.

SWITZERLAND

Swiss Confederation (Demonym: Swiss) with Capital: Bern has a Population: 9 million in an Area: 41290. Its Languages are German, French and Religion: Christian 81%, Muslim 6%. Its Currency is Franc.

Switzerland is a landlocked country situated on the confluence of western, central and southern Europe. It borders Italy to the south; France to the west; Germany to the north; and Austria and Liechtenstein to the east. Switzerland is geographically divided among the Swiss plateau, the Alps and the Jura. The Alps occupy the greater part of the territory, whereas most of the population is concentrated in the plateau, which hosts the larger cities and economic centres, including Zurich, Geneva and Basel, Zurich being the largest. 35 % Christians are Catholic and 25 % Swiss Reformed. Its population density is 207 and time UTC +1.

Switzerland originates from the Old Swiss Confederacy established in the late Middle Ages, following a series of military successes against Austria and Burgundy; the Federal Charter of 1291 is considered the country's founding document. Swiss independence from the Holy Roman Empire was formally recognised in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It has four main linguistic and cultural regions including German, French, Italian and Romansh. Although most Swiss are German speaking, national identity is fairly cohesive, being rooted in a common historical background, shared values such as federalism, direct democracy and Alpine symbolism. Swiss identity transcends language, ethnicity, and religion, leading to Switzerland being described as a Willensnation, meaning nation of volition.

It is a federal republic composed of 26 cantons, with federal authorities based in Bern. In the federal assembly, the upper house is Council of States and the lower house National Council.

It is one of the world's most developed countries, with the highest nominal wealth per adult. It ranks first in HDI and performs highly on several international metrics, including economic competitiveness and democratic governing. Its cities rank among the highest in quality of life albeit with the highest cost of living. Only 37 % of the citizens own a house. Its GDP nominal is a trillion dollars with a per capita value of 103,000 dollars, the 5th highest in the world. Its HDI is 0.962, ranking first globally.

The economy is stable, prosperous and high tech. Zurich and Geneva are regarded as global cities, ranked as alpha and beta respectively. Basel is the capital of pharmaceutical industry hosting Novartis, Roche, and many other players. Switzerland is considered as the land of cooperatives with the ten largest cooperative companies including Migros and Coop.

Manufacturing is the most important economic sector. Products include chemicals, health and pharmaceutical goods, scientific and precision measuring instruments and musical instruments. It is the 13th largest exporter. The major exported goods are chemicals, machines, electronics, precision instruments and watches. Exported services amount to a third of exports. Agricultural protectionism contributes to high food prices. The service sector especially banking and insurance, commodities trading, tourism and international organisations, is another important industry. Switzerland is a tax haven. Its banking sector is among the most corrupt in the world. It has the largest account balances.

Switzerland has maintained a policy of armed neutrality since the 16th century and has not fought an international war since 1815. It is the birthplace of the Red Cross and hosts the offices or headquarters of most major international institutions, including the WTO, the WHO, the ILO, the FIFA and the UN. It is a founding member of the EFTA but not part of the EU, the European Economic Area (EEA), or the Eurozone. However, it participates in the European single market and the Schengen Area. It joined the UN only in 2002 but pursues an active foreign policy that includes frequent involvement in peace building. The high percentage of the Muslims in Switzerland is not a well-known fact.

SYRIA

Syrian Arab Republic (Demonym: Syrian) with Capital: Damascus has a Population: 23 million in an Area: 185180. Its Languages are Arabic, Kurdish and Religion: Muslim 77%, Christian 10%. Its Currency is Pound.

Syria is a country located in West Asia in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. It borders Lebanon to the southwest; Mediterranean to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east and south east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest. It is a country of fertile plains, high mountains and deserts. It has Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks, Albanians and Chechens. The capital is the largest city followed by Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Hama and Raqqa. It is the only country ruled by Baath party that proclaims Arab socialism and Arab nationalism. 75% population is Arab and 10 % Kurd. 75 % Muslims are Sunni, 3 % Shia and 10 % Alawite. The population density is 118 and time UTC + 3.

The name Syria historically referred to a wider region, broadly synonymous with Levant, and known in Arabic as al-Sham. The modern state encompasses the sites of several ancient kingdoms and empires, including the Eblan civilisation of the 3rd millennium BC. In the Islamic era, Damascus was the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate and a provincial capital of the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt. The modern Syrian state

was established in the mid-20th century after centuries of Ottoman rule. After a period as the French mandate from 1923 to 1946, the newly created state represented the largest Arab state to emerge from the formerly Ottoman-ruled Syrian provinces. It gained independence and became a founding UN member in 1945.

The post-independence period was tumultuous, with multiple military coups between 1949 and 1971. In 1958, Syria entered a brief union with Egypt as part of the UAR. This was terminated in 1961. A coup in 1963 brought the Baath Party to power. Hafiz Al Assad established the minority Alawi rule. His son took power in 2000 after his death. His regime is repressive to the extremes and three parties challenge his rule.

The country is among the worst in human rights, freedom, corruption and drug trafficking. Almost a half million people have been killed in the civil war and 5 million have fled the country. 90 % live below poverty line and 80 % face food insecurity.

Its GDP nominal is 11 billion dollars with a per capita value of 533 dollars. Its HDI is medium. Syria is a member of the Arab League and the NAM.

TAIWAN

Republic of China (Demony: Taiwanese) with Capital: Taipei has a Population: 24 million in an Area: 36,197. Its Languages are Mandarin and Hokkien and Religion: Buddhist 21%, Christian 6%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Taiwan is a country in East Asia. It is located at the junction of East and South China Seas in the north western Pacific Ocean. It borders the PRC to the northwest, Japan to the northeast and the Philippines to the south. The territories controlled by the ROC consist of 168 islands. The main island is also called Formosa. It has mountain ranges dominating the eastern two-thirds and plains in the western third, where its highly urbanised population is concentrated. The capital Taipei forms its largest metropolitan area. Taiwan is one of the most densely populated world countries. 96 % of the population is Han. 35 % follow Buddhism and 33 % Taoism. Population density is 650 and time UTC +8.

Taiwan has been settled for at least 25,000 years. Ancestors of the indigenous population settled the island around 6,000 years ago. In the 17th century, large-scale Han Chinese immigration began under a Dutch colony and continued under the Kingdom of Tungning, the first predominantly Han Chinese state in Taiwanese history. The island was annexed in 1683 by the Qing dynasty of China and remained under Japan from 1945 to 1952. The Chinese Civil War resulted in the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the ROC government fled to Taiwan. Jurisdiction of the ROC has since been limited to Taiwan, Penghu and smaller islands.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the ROC transitioned from a one-party state under martial law to a multiparty democracy, with democratically elected presidents since 1996. The political status of Taiwan is contentious. The ROC no longer represents China as a member of the UN after UN members voted in 1971 to recognise the PRC instead. The ROC maintained its claim of being the sole legitimate representative of China and its territory until 1991, when it ceased to regard the CCP as a rebellious group and recognised its control over mainland China. Taiwan is claimed by the PRC, which refuses to establish diplomatic relations with countries that recognise the ROC. Taiwan maintains official diplomatic ties with 11 of the 193 UN member states and the Holy See. Many others maintain unofficial diplomatic relations through representative offices and institutions that function as de facto embassies and consulates. International organisations in which the PRC participates either refuse to grant membership to Taiwan or allow it to participate on a non-state basis. Domestically, the major political contention is between parties favouring Chinese unification and promoting a Taiwanese identity. Into the 21st century, both sides have moderated their positions to broaden their appeal.

In the early 1960s, Taiwan entered a period of rapid economic growth and industrialisation called the Taiwan Miracle. Taiwan's export-oriented industrial economy is the 21st largest in the world by nominal GDP, with a focus on steel, machinery, electronics, and chemical manufacturing. It is a developed country ranked high in civil liberties, healthcare, and human development. GDP nominal is 750 billion dollars with a per capita value of 73,000 dollars. HDI is very high.

TAJIKISTAN

Republic of Tajikistan (Demonym: Tajikistani) with Capital: Dushanbe has a Population: 10 million in an Area: 143100. Its Languages are Tajik, Persian and Religion: Muslim 96%, Christian 2%. Its Currency is Somoni.

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia. It borders Afghanistan to the south; Uzbekistan to the west, Kyrgyzstan to the north and China to the east. It is narrowly separated from Pakistan by Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan. The ethnic groups in Tajikistan include 86 % Tajik and 11 % Uzbek. Among the Muslims, 96 % are Hanafi and 4 per cent Ismaili Shiite. Its government is unitary presidential republic. Its population density is 50 per square kilometre and time is UTC + 5 hours.

The Samanid Empire started in 819. The area was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1868 and independence was achieved in 1990.

Its per capita income is 1300 dollars. 30 % of its GDP comes from immigrant remittances, mostly from Tajik workers in Russia. Its HDI is medium. The economy is

fragile due to corruption, uneven economic reforms and mismanagement. Aluminium and cotton are exported. The aluminium industry is the biggest in Central Asia and one of the biggest in the world. Severe food shortages are common. Vaksh and Panj rivers have great hydropower potential and the government has focused on attracting investment for internal use of electricity.

Tajikistan is home to the Neuk Dam, the second highest dam by elevation in the world. 20 % of its population lives on one dollar per day. Tajik workers in Russia are decreasing by the day. Drug trafficking is the major source of illegal income. Tajikistan is an important transit country for Afghan narcotics bound for Russia and the Western Europe. It holds the third position in the world for heroin confiscation. Drug money corrupts the society and the government. There was a civil war between clans for power after independence. Close to a hundred thousand lives were lost as a consequence. After the war, the criminals fighting on both sides became one and are jointly involved in drug trafficking.

Besides Russia, China is its major trade partner. Tajikistan is a part of the group of countries associated with Chinese investment within the Belt and Road initiative. It is a member of the UN, CIS, OSCE, OIC, ECO, SCO, CSTO and a NATO PfP partner.

TANZANIA

United Republic of Tanzania (Demonym: Tanzanian) with Capital: Dodoma has a Population: 62 million in an Area: 947,303. Its Languages are Kiswahili, English and Religion: Christian 63%, Muslim 34%. Its Currency is Shilling.

Tanzania is a country in East Africa within the African Great Lakes region. It borders Uganda to the northwest; Kenya to the northeast; Comoros Islands of the Indian Ocean to the east; Mozambique and Malawi to the south; Zambia to the southwest; and Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC to the west. It is the most populous country located entirely south of the equator. Population density is 65 and time UTC +3.

Migration into Tanzania started millions of years ago. In the late 9th century the mainland came under German rule, followed by British rule after WW1. Tanganyika and Zanzibar became independent in 1961-1963. They merged in 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania. It is a member of the Commonwealth. There are over 100 ethnic groups.

The former capital retains most government offices and is the country's largest city, principal port, and leading commercial centre. Zanzibar is a Muslim majority region in Tanzania, with Arabic as its language. Tanzania is mountainous and densely forested in the northeast, having Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa

and the highest single free-standing Mountain above sea level in the world. Three of African Great Lakes are partly within Tanzania.

Its GDP nominal is 84 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1300 dollars and HDI is low. It is a member of the UN, AU, EAC and SADC.

THAILAND

Kingdom of Thailand (Demonym: Thai) with Capital: Bangkok has a Population: 70 million in an Area: 514,000. Its Languages are Thai, English and Religion: Buddhist 90%, Muslim 5%. Its Currency is Baht.

Historically known as Siam till 1939, Thailand is a country in Southeast Asia on the Indochina Peninsula. It borders Myanmar to the northwest; Laos to the northeast and east; Cambodia to the southeast; Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia to the south; and the Andaman Sea and southern extremity of Myanmar to the west. It also shares maritime borders with Vietnam to the southeast and Indonesia and India to the southwest. Thailand stretches south to a position close to Malacca Strait. Bangkok is the largest city. 80 % people are Thai, 12 % Chinese Thai and 4 % Khmer. Population density is 132 and time UTC +8.

Tai peoples migrated from south-western China to mainland Southeast Asia from the 6th to 11th centuries. Indianised kingdoms such as the Mon, Khmer Empire, and Malay states ruled the region, competing with Thai states such as the King of Ngoenyang, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya, which also rivalled each other. European contact began in 1511 with a Portuguese diplomatic mission to Ayutthaya, which became a regional power by the end of the 15th century. It reached its peak during the 18th century, until it was destroyed in the Burmese-Siamese War. King Taksin the Great quickly reunified the fragmented territory and established the short-lived Thonburi Kingdom in 1767-1782, of which he was the only king. He was succeeded in 1782 by Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke, Rama 1, and the first monarch of the current Chakri dynasty. Throughout the era of Western imperialism in Asia, Siam remained the only state in the region to avoid colonisation by foreign powers, though it was often forced to make territorial, trade, and legal concessions in unequal treaties. The Siamese system of government was centralised and transformed into a modern unitary absolute monarchy during the reign of Chulalongkorn, Rama 5. In WW1, Siam sided with the Allies, a political decision made in order to amend the unequal treaties. Following a bloodless revolution in 1932, it became a constitutional monarchy and changed its official name to Thailand, becoming an ally of Japan in WW2. In the late 1950s, a military coup under Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat revived the monarchy's historically influential role in politics. During the Cold War, Thailand

became a major ally of the USA and played an anti-communism role in the region as a member of the failed SEATO, but since 1975 it has sought to improve relations with Communist China and its neighbours.

Thailand alternates between democracy and military rule. Since 2019, it has been a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. In practice however, structural advantages in the constitution have ensured the military's continued influence in politics. Thailand is a middle power in global affairs and a founding member of ASEAN.

It has the second largest economy in Southeast Asia and 23rd highest in the world, ranking 91st in GDP per capita. It is a newly industrialised economy, with manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism as leading sectors. GDP nominal is 543 billion dollars, with a per capita value of 24,000 dollars. HDI is very high.

TOGO

Togolese Republic (Demonym: Togolese) with Capital: Lome has a Population: 9 million in an Area: 56,785. Its Languages are French and Ewe and Religion: Christian 48%, Muslim 18%. Its Currency is CFA Franc.

Togo is a country in western Africa in the Gulf of Guinea. It borders Ghana to the west; Benin to the east and Burkina Faso to the north. It is one of the least developed countries. Its capital is a port city. It is one of the smallest countries in Africa and has a width of slightly more than kilometres between its neighbours Ghana and Benin. Its population density is 125 and time UTC.

Various peoples settled in the boundaries of the present day Togo between the 11th and 16th centuries. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, the coastal region served as a European slave trading outpost, earning Togo and the surrounding region the name of Slave Coast. In 1884, Germany declared a region including a protectorate called Togoland. After WW1, rule over Togo was transferred to France. Togo gained independence from France in 1960. In 1967, Eyadema assumed power through an anti-communist coup. His son replaced him in 2005, after his 38 year rule, the longest in the region by any ruler.

Being a tropical sub-Saharan nation, its economy depends mostly on agriculture. 94 % population is West African. GDP is 10 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1000 dollars and HDI is low. It is a member of the UN, AU, OIC, South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, Francophonie, Commonwealth, and ECOWAS.

TONGA

Kingdom of Tonga (Demonym: **Tongan**) with Capital: Nukualofa has a Population: 100, 000 in an Area: 748. Its Languages are Tongan, English and Religion: Christian 99%. Its Currency is Paanga.

Tonga is an island nation in Polynesia, part of Oceania. It is an archipelago of 171 islands 45 of which are uninhabited. Its small land area is scattered over 700,000 square kilometres of Southern Pacific Ocean. It stretches 800 kilometres north-south. It is surrounded by Fiji to the northwest, Samoa to the northeast and American Samoa to the east. 70 % of the Tongan population lives in main island Tongatapu. Its population density is 140 and time UTC +13. 97 % of the population is Tongan.

Tonga was first visited by the Dutch for trade in 1616. British and Spanish visits followed. Christian missionaries started coming by 1800. From 1900 to 1970, Tonga had British protection without losing sovereignty. Britain mostly looked after its foreign affairs. Independence was achieved in 1970. In 2010, constitutional monarchy replaced absolute monarchy. Partial representative elections were held after necessary legislation.

The royal family dominates and the nobles own the monetary sector, particularly telecommunications and satellite services. It was named the 6th most corrupt country by Forbes magazine in 2008. Its GDP nominal per capita is 5000 dollars. Half of the population works abroad, mainly in Australia, New Zealand and the US. The economy heavily depends on their remittances and they are allowed dual nationality.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (Demonym: Trinidadian, Tobagonian) with Capital: Port of Spain has a Population: 1.5 million in an Area: 5128. Its Languages are English and Hindi and Religion: Christian 63%, Hindu 20 %. Its Currency is Dollar.

Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost country in the Caribbean. It has Grenada 130 kilometres to the north, and Venezuela 11 kilometres to the southwest. It consists of the main islands Trinidad and Tobago and numerous small islands. It shares maritime borders with Barbados to the east, Grenada to the northeast and Venezuela to the south and west. It is generally considered a part of the West Indies.

Its largest and most populous city is San Fernando. Its population density is 264. Its ethnic groups include 36 % Indians, 34 % Africans and 23 % mixed. 6 % population is Muslim.

The country had been inhabited for centuries by indigenous people before becoming a colony in the Spanish Empire. Britain captured the islands in 1802 separately but unified them in 1889. It gained independence from UK in 1962, joined the Caribbean Community in 1973 and became a republic in 1976.

Unlike most Caribbean nations, the economy is primarily industrial with emphasis on petroleum and petrochemicals. Much of the wealth is derived from large oil and gas reserves. It is the most developed and a wealthy nation in the Caribbean. Its GDP nominal per capita of 31,000 dollars and it ranks 40th among the top 70 high income countries. Besides petroleum industry, manufacturing is important to the local economy. The country supplies manufactured goods, notably food, beverages, and cement to the Caribbean region. Tourism is growing but is much less significant than in many other Caribbean islands. Agriculture products include citrus and cocoa.

It is well known for its African and Indian cultures, reflected in its large and famous Carnival, Diwali, and Hosay celebrations, as well as being the birthplace of steelpan, the limbo, and music styles such as calypso, soca, rapso, parang and, chutney.

TUNISIA

Republic of Tunisia (Demonym: Tunisian) with Capital: Tunis has a Population: 12 million in an Area: 163,610. Its Languages are Arabic, French and Religion: Muslim 99%. Its Currency is Dinar.

Tunisia is the northernmost country in Africa. It is a part of the Maghreb region of North Africa. It borders Algeria to the west and southwest; Libya to the southeast and the Mediterranean Sea to the north and east. It also shares maritime borders with Italy and Malta to the north and east. 98 % population is Arab and 99 % Sunni Muslim. Population density is 72 and time UTC + 1.

Tunisia ranks relatively high in GDP and HDI. The GDP nominal is 52 billion dollars with a per capita income of 4200 dollars and HDI 0.731. Within Africa, Tunisia features the archaeological sites of Carthage dating back to the 9th century BC, as well as the Great Mosque of Kairouan. Known for its ancient architecture souks, and blue coasts, it contains the eastern end of the Atlas Mountains and the northern reaches of the Sahara desert. Much of its remaining territory is arable land. Its 1310 kilometre long coastline includes the African conjunction of the western and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Basin. Located on its northeastern coast, Tunis is its

capital and the largest city after which it is named. Its northernmost point Cape Angela is also the northernmost point on African continent. It is strategically important as it extends north well into the Mediterranean towards Malta, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Tunisian Arabic is the most spoken language, while French serves as administrative and educational language though it has no official status.

Beginning in early antiquity, Tunisia was inhabited by the indigenous Berbers. The Phoenicians, a Semitic people, began to arrive in the 12th century BC, settling on the coast and establishing several settlements, of which Carthage emerged as the most powerful by the 7th century BC. The descendants of the Phoenician settlers came to be known as the Punic people. Ancient Carthage was a major mercantile empire and a military rival to the Roman Republic. In 146 BC it was defeated by the Romans who occupied it for most of the next 800 years. The Romans introduced Christianity and left architectural legacies like the Amphitheatre of El Jem. Arab Muslims conquered all of Tunisia, finally succeeding in 697 after several attempts starting in 647, and settled with their tribes and families, bringing Islam and Arab culture to the local inhabitants. A large scale Arab migration of Banu Hilal and Bani Sulaym tribes in the 11th and 12th centuries rapidly accelerated this process. By around the 15th century, the region of modern-day Tunisia had already been almost completely Arabised, establishing Arabs as the demographic majority of population. Then in 1546, the Ottoman Empire established control there, holding sway for over 300 years, until 1881, when the French conquered Tunisia. In 1956, Tunisia gained independence as the Tunisian Republic under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba with the help of activists such as Chedly Kallala, Farhat Hached, and Salah Ben Youssef. Today, Tunisia's culture and identity are rooted in this centuries-long intersection of different cultures and ethnicities.

In 2011, the Tunisian Revolution, which was triggered by dissatisfaction with the lack of freedom and democracy under the 24-year rule of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, overthrew his regime and catalysed the broader Arab Spring movement across the region. From 2014 to 2020, Tunisia was considered the only democratic state in the Arab world. After a democratic backsliding, Tunisia is well integrated into the international community. It is a member of the UN; Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie; the Arab League; the OIC; the African Union; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; the NAM, the International Criminal Court and the Group of 77, among others. It maintains close economic and political relations with some European countries, particularly France and Italy, due to their geographical proximity. Tunisia also has an association agreement with the EU, and is a major non-NATO ally of the US.

TURKEY

Republic of Turkiye (Demonym: Turk) with Capital: Ankara has a Population: 82 million in an Area: 780,580. Its Languages are Turkish and Kurdish and Religion: Muslim 98%. Its Currency is Lira.

Turkey is a transcontinental country mainly on the Anatolian Peninsula in West Asia. It has a smaller portion on Balkan Peninsula in South East Europe. East Thrace, the part in Europe is separated from Anatolia by Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. These three are collectively called the Turkish Straits.

Turkey borders Greece and Bulgaria to the northwest; Black Sea to the north; Georgia to the northeast; Armenia, the Azerbaijan enclave of Nakhchivan and Iran to the east; Iraq and Syria to the southeast; Mediterranean to the south and Aegean Sea to the west. Cyprus is off its south coast. It is the 46th largest country in the world by area and 18th largest by population. Its population density is 111. Its largest city is Istanbul its time zone is UTC + 3.

Turkey has coastal plains, a high central plateau, and various mountain ranges; its climate is temperate with harsher conditions in the interior. Home to three biodiversity hotspots, Turkey is prone to frequent earthquakes and climate change. Turkey has universal healthcare, growing access to education and increasing inventiveness. It is a leading TV content exporter. With some 50 UNESCO heritages and a rich cuisine, Turkey is the fourth most visited country in the world.

Its ethnic groups are Turkish 75 %, Kurds 19 % and others 6 %. 96 % Muslims are Sunni and 4 % Shiite. Its government is unitary presidential constitutional republic and its legislature is called Grand National Assembly.

Human habitation started in Turkey in the Late Palaeolithic. Home to important Neolithic sites like Gaobekli Tepe and some of the earliest farming areas, present-day Turkey was inhabited by various ancient peoples. Hattians were assimilated by the incoming Anatolian peoples. Increasing diversity during classical Anatolia transitioned into cultural Hellenization following the conquests of Alexander, the Great. Hellenization continued during the Roman and Byzantine eras. The Seljuk Turks began migrating into Anatolia in the 11th century, starting the Turkification process. The Seljuk Sultanate of Rum ruled Anatolia until the Mongol invasion in 1243, when it disintegrated into Turkish principalities. Beginning in 1299, the Ottomans united the principalities and expanded; Mehmed 2 conquered Istanbul in 1453. During the reigns of Selim 1 and Suleiman, the Magnificent; the Ottoman Empire became a global power. From 1789 onwards, the empire saw major transformation, reforms, and centralisation while its territory declined.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, persecution of Muslims during the Ottoman contraction and in the Russian Empire resulted in large-scale loss of life and mass migration into modern-day Turkey from the Balkans, Caucasus, and Crimea. Under

the control of the Three Pashas, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War in 1914, during which the Ottoman government committed genocide against its Armenian, Greek and Assyrian subjects. After its defeat, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned. The Turkish War of Independence resulted in the abolition of the sultanate in 1922 and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The Republic was proclaimed in 1923 modelled on the reforms initiated by the country's first president, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Turkey remained neutral during most of WW2, but was involved in the Korean War. Coups in 1960 and 1980 interrupted the transition to multi-party system. Now it is a unitary presidential republic.

Its GDP nominal is 1 trillion dollars with a per capita value of 12,000 dollars and HDI very high. Turkey is an upper-middle-income and emerging country; its economy is the 11th largest in the world. It is a founding member of the OECD, G20, and Organisation of Turkic States. With a geopolitically significant location, Turkey is a regional power and an early member of NATO. An EU candidate, Turkey is part of the EU Customs Union, CoE, OIC and TURKSOY. Turkey is the most probable core state of the Muslim Civilisation as per Samuel Huntington

TURKMENISTAN

Republic of Turkmenistan (Demonym: Turkmen) with Capital: Ashgabat has a Population: 6.5 million in an Area: 488100. Its Languages are Turkmen and Russian and Religion: Muslim 93%, Christian 6%. Its Currency is Manat.

It is in Central Asia. It has Kazakhstan to the north; Uzbekistan to the northeast; Tajikistan to the east without border; Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south and Caspian Sea to the west.

It is one of the six Turkic states. It is the least populous Central Asian Republic and one of the most sparsely populated nations on the Asian continent. Its ethnic groups include 86 % Turkmen, 6 % Uzbek and 6 % Russians. Its population density is 14.

Turkmenistan has long served as a thoroughfare for several empires and cultures. Merv is one of the oldest oasis cities in Central Asia and was once among the biggest cities in the world. It was also one of the great cities of the Muslim world and an important stop on the Silk Road. Annexed by the Russian Empire in 1881, Turkmenistan figured prominently in the anti-Bolshevik movement in Central Asia. In 1925, Turkmenistan became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union. It became independent after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Most of the country is covered by the Karakum Desert. From 1993 to 2019, citizens received government provided electricity, water and natural gas free of charge. The GDP nominal per capita is 13,000 dollars. Turkmenistan has the 4th largest gas reserves and substantial oil resources. China is the largest buyer of gas from Turkmenistan. Its oil production is 10 million tons per year. It is developing an oil field in the Caspian Sea in cooperation with Azerbaijan. It is an observer state in the Organisation of Turkic States, the Turksoy community and a member of the UN.

TUVALU

Tuvalu (Demonym: Tuvaluan) with Capital: Funafuti has a Population: 12000 in an Area: 26. Its Languages are Tuvaluan and English and Religion: Christian 97%. Its Currency is Tuvaluan Dollar.

It is an island nation in Polynesia sub-region of Oceania in the Pacific Ocean. Its islands are situated midway between Hawaii and Australia. They lie east and northeast of the Santa Cruz Islands which belong to Solomon Islands. It is northeast of Vanuatu; southeast of Nauru; south of Kiribati, west of Tokelau and north of Fiji.

Tuvalu is composed of three reef islands and six atolls. They are spread out between the latitudes 5S and 10S and longitudes 176E and 180E. Tuvalu is only slightly west of the International Date Line. Its highest elevation is 12 feet above sea level. Being a low lying country, Tuvalu is extremely vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change and is often predicted to be the first country to submerge totally. It is active in international climate negotiations as part of the Alliance of Small Island States. Also, Tuvalu is volcanic and in area it is the 4th smallest country in the world. Its population density is 475.

It was formerly known as Alice Islands and is relatively a less known country. In 1569, Spanish navigator and documenter Alvaro de Mendaña became the first European to sail through the archipelago. Britain gained its control in 1892. Independence was achieved in 1978. Tuvalu is a Commonwealth realm with British monarch as its constitutional head.

Its GDP nominal per capita is 3000 dollars. Australian dollar is also in use as currency. There is hardly any soil for agriculture and food is imported. Economy is mainly based on licensing of fishing permits to international companies; grants, aid projects and remittances from Tuvaluan seafarers who work on cargo ships.

UGANDA

Republic of Uganda (Demonym: Ugandan) with Capital: Kampala has a Population: 45 million in an Area: 236040. Its Languages are English and Swahili and Religion: Christian 87%, Muslim 12%. Its Currency is Shilling.

It is a landlocked country in East Central Africa, bordering Kenya to the east; South Sudan to the south; the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west; Rwanda to the southwest and Tanzania to the south. Its population density is 158 and time UTC + 3. Uganda falls in the African Great Lakes region. The southern part of the country includes a substantial portion of Lake Victoria, shared with Kenya and Tanzania. As this lake is origin of the Nile River, Uganda also lies within Nile Basin. It has generally a modified equatorial climate.

Uganda takes its name from the Buganda Kingdom in major part of south of the country that includes the capital Kampala. The original inhabitants of Uganda were hunter-gatherers 2000 years ago when Bantu speaking people moved to the south. The British arrived in 1849 and made it a protectorate. It gained independence in 1962. The period since independence has been marked by violent conflicts including an 8 year-long far-right military dictatorship led by Eidi Amin. A lengthy civil war against the Lord's resistance army in northern region is led by Joseph Kony. It has caused hundreds of thousands of casualties.

Apart from English and Swahili, the Luganda language is spoken almost throughout the country. The country has largely untapped crude oil and gas resources. Its GDP nominal per capita is 1200 dollars and HDI is medium. .

UKRAINE

Republic of Ukraine (Demonym: Ukrainian) with Capital: Kiev has a Population: 33 million in an Area: 603700. Its Languages are Ukrainian and Russian and Religion: Christian 84%, Muslim 1%. Its Currency is Hryvnia.

It is in Eastern Europe. It borders Russia to the north east; Belarus to the north; Poland, Slovenia and Hungary to the west; and Romania and Moldova to the south. In the south and southeast, it also borders Black Sea and Sea of Azov. Kiev is the largest city in Ukraine. Its other cities include Kharkov, Dnipro and Odessa. Religious sect is unanswered. 78 % population is Ukrainian and 17 % Russian. Population density is 60 and time UTC +2.

The official language in the country is Ukrainian, but Russian is also widely spoken, especially in its east and south. Ukraine is the second largest European country after Russia. During the Middle Ages, Ukraine was the site of early Slavic expansion and the area became a key centre of East Slavic culture under the state of Kievan Rus, which emerged in the 9th century. The state eventually disintegrated into rival regional powers and was ultimately destroyed by the Mongol invasions of the 13th century. The area was then contested, divided, and ruled by a variety of external powers for the next 600 years, including the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Austrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Russia. The Cossack Hetmanate emerged in Central Ukraine in the 17th century marked on maps as Ukraine, land of the Cossacks, but was portioned between Russia and Poland, and ultimately absorbed by the Russian Empire. Ukrainian nationalism developed and, following Russian revolution in 1917, the short-lived Ukrainian Peoples Republic was formed. The Bolsheviks consolidated control over much of the former empire and established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union when it was formed in 1922. In the early 1930s, millions of Ukrainians died in the Holodomor, a human made famine. The German occupation during WW2 in Ukraine was devastating with 7 million Ukrainians killed.

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 as the Soviet Union dissolved, and declared itself neutral. A new constitution was adopted in 1996. Ukraine is a unitary state and its system of government is a semi-presidential republic. A series of mass demonstrations, known as the Euromaidan, led to the establishment of a new government in 2014 after a revolution. Russia then unilaterally annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, and pro-Russian unrest culminated in a war in the Dona bass between Russian backed separatists and government forces in Eastern Ukraine. The war could well trigger World War III. It is a developing country which is the poorest in Europe by nominal GDP per capita and corruption remains an issue. However, due to its extensive fertile land, pre-war Ukraine was one of the largest grain exporters in the world. The GDP nominal is 173 billion dollars with a per capita value of 5300 dollars and HDI is high. It is a founding member of the UN, as well as a member of the CoE, WTO, and OSCE. Since the outbreak of war with Russia, Ukraine has continued to seek closer ties with the USA, EU and NATO.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (Demonym: Emirati) with Capital: Abu Dhabi has a Population: 10 million in an Area: 83,600. Its Languages are Arabic and English and Religion: Muslim 77%, Christian 18%. Its Currency is Dirham.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a country in West Asia, in the Middle East. It is located at the southeast end of Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf. It borders Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south. It has maritime borders in the Persian Gulf with Qatar and Iran. Emirati Arabs are a mere 12 % of the population. 60 % population is South Asian including 38 % Indian, 10 % Bangladeshi and 9 % Pakistani. 10 % population is Egyptian and 6 % Filipino. 76 % population is Muslim, 9 % Christian and 6 % Hindu. The population density is 120 and time UTC +4.

Commonly referred to as Emirates, the UAE is a collective monarchy formed from a federation of seven emirates including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al Khaima, and Umm Al Quwain. The boundaries between the states are complex with numerous enclaves and exclaves. Each emirate is an absolute monarchy governed by a ruler. Together the rulers form the Federal Supreme Council. As the highest executive and legislative body, it elects a president and two vice presidents from among their members. In practice, the ruler of Abu Dhabi serves as the president while the ruler of Dubai is the vice president and the prime minister.

Its oil and gas reserves are 6th and 7th largest respectively in the world. Oil revenues are used into healthcare, education and infrastructure. To reduce dependence on oil revenue, UAE diversified the economy with focus on tourism and business. The GDP nominal is 900 billion with a per capita value of 90,000 dollars, 6th highest in the world. The HDI is very high. The UAE is a member of the UN, Arab League, the OIC, the OPEC, the NAM, the GCC and the BRICS. It is also a dialogue partner of the SCO.

UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain and N Ireland (Demonym: British) with Capital: London has a Population: 67 million in an Area: 244,376. Its Languages are English and Welsh and Religion: Christian 71%, Muslim 4%. Its Currency is Pound sterling.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island, commonly known as the United Kingdom (UK) is a country in North-western Europe, off the north western coast of the continental mainland. It comprises Great Britain, Northern Ireland, most of the smaller islands within and British Isles and British overseas territories. Britain itself includes England, Scotland and Wales only and UK and Britain are not synonymous. The United Kingdom is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, the English Channel, the Celtic Sea, and the Irish Sea. Northern Ireland shares a land border with the Republic of Ireland. The capital London is located at 51N7E position. Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Irish are the regional and minority languages.

81 % population is white, 7 % Asian and 3 % black. Demonym is British, Briton and Brit, colloquial. The population density in UK is 276 and time UTC.

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Island are also called constituent countries of the UK. . Its government is unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The upper house of the legislature is called the House of Lords and the lower house, the House of Commons. The driving is to the left.

The United Kingdom has evolved from a series of annexations, unions and separations of constituent countries over several hundred years. Laws in Wales Acts were passed between 1535 and 1542 and Union of the Crowns achieved in 1603. Treaty of Union was signed in 1706 and Acts of Union of England and Scotland in 1707. Acts of Union of Great Britain and Ireland were passed in 1801 and Irish Free State Constitution Act came to effect in 1922.

The GDP Nominal total is 3.332 trillion dollars, 6th highest with a per capita value of 49,000 dollars, 21st highest. Its HDI is very high, 18th highest. The currency in use is called pound sterling (GBP). The UK has a partially regulated market economy. Based on market exchange rates, it is the sixth largest economy and the second largest in Europe by nominal GDP. Pound sterling is the 4th most traded currency in the foreign exchange market and fourth largest reserve currency after the US dollar, euro and yen. Sterling was the second best performing G 10 currency against the dollar in 2023 with a gain of about 5 %, with only the Swiss franc performing better. London is the world capital for foreign exchange trading, with a global share of 38 % of the daily 7.5 trillion dollars global turnover.

The service sector makes up 80 % of the GDP. UK is the second largest exporter of services. London is the most popular tourist destination in Europe. Lloyd's of London is the largest insurance market of the world. WPP is the biggest advertising company in the world. UK is home to the largest e-commerce market in Europe.

Aston Martin manufactures vehicles in Gaydon, England. The automotive industry employs 800,000 people, with a turnover of 67 billion pounds, generating 27 billion pounds in exports. This is 10 % of the total export of goods. No less than 775,000 passenger vehicles and 100,000 commercial vehicles including luxury cars are produced annually in UK.

The Kingdom is a major centre for production of engines. As many as 1.5 million engines are produced annually. It is the 4th largest exporter of engines. The aerospace industry is the second largest. The agriculture industry produces 60 % of food needs. Its two third is devoted to live stock and the remaining one third to arable crops. Fishing industry in UK is significant but restricted.

The income inequality in the Kingdom is one of the highest in Europe. Cambridge is the most intensive research cluster for science and technology. The UK led the industrial revolution. Newton, Darwin, Maxwell and Stephen Hawking were from UK.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States of America (Demonym: American) with Capital Washington DC has a Population: 335 million in an Area: 9.8 million. Its major Languages are English and Spanish and Religion: Christian 70% and Muslim 4%. Its Currency is US dollar.

The United States of America is a country in central North America, between Canada in the north and Mexico to the south. It lies between Atlantic Ocean in the east and Pacific Ocean in the west. It has overseas territories covered separately in this book under the heading Overseas Territories.

The United States of America (USA), commonly known as the United States (U.S. or US) or **America**, is a federal republic. It consists of 50 states, a federal district, five major self-governing territories, and various possessions. The most populous city is New York. The USA is the world's third largest country by area as well as population.

The USA is a founding member of the UN and a permanent member of its Security Council. It is also amongst founders of the World Bank, IMF and NATO. A highly developed country, it is the largest in economy and imports, and the second largest in exports in the world. Its population is a mere 4% of the world total, but it holds 30% of global wealth, the largest share by a single country. Despite some income disparity, it ranks high in socioeconomic equality and worker productivity. It is the foremost military power and a leading society in politics, science and culture.

A citizen of America is American. United States, the US and American refer to the country adjectively. The examples are American values or the US Forces. In English, the word American rarely refers to topics or subjects not directly connected with the United States. 62 % people are white, 12 % black and 6 % Asian. 34 % Christians are Protestant and 23 % Catholic.

Population density is 87. Time zones are UTC-4 to UTC-12, +10 and +11.

First migrants came to America from Siberia some 12000 years ago. The first known use of the name **America** dates back to 1507. The European colonisation of American continent began in the 16th century. The United States emerged from the 13 British colonies established along its east coast.

Numerous disputes between Britain and the colonies led to the American Revolutionary War. The British King sought to control American trade and tax the colonies without their consent. The latter rebelled and with French support, won independence from Britain.

Britain interfered with American commerce and forced American sailors to join the British navy. A war erupted and ended with no clear winner. The US unsuccessfully invaded Canada, a British colony. The British burned Washington DC and the White House but were defeated in other battles. In 1814, the First Lady Dolly Madison fled the White House just before the British arrived. She had been preparing a large dinner party, and she left the food on the table. The British feasted on the food and then set fire to the White House.

The USA embarked on a vigorous expansion across North America throughout the 19th century gradually acquiring new territories, displacing Native Americans, and admitting new states till it spanned the continent. Between 1846 and 1848, the US defeated Mexico and annexed Texas, California and all or part of the six western states. The Confederacy declared separation of eleven Southern states from the Union. The Union fought to keep them and won. Slavery was abolished. America supported Cuba for independence from Spain. Cuba became independent. Spain also lost the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to the US.

Colonial and military competition between European powers caused the WW1 from 1913 to 1918. Triple Entente fought Triple Alliance. The former included Britain, France and Russia supported by the US, Italy and Japan. US entered the war in 1917. Together they were called Allied Forces. Triple Alliance or Central Powers included Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Allied Forces defeated Central powers. Some 9 million combatants and 7 million civilians were killed. In the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was made to pay for reparations. This war confirmed the US status as a global military power. Another mega disaster took place at this time. In 1918 influenza killed 100 million people.

WW2 of 1939 to 1945 was a war between the Allies and the Axis. The former included Britain, the US, France and the USSR. The Axis included Germany, Italy, and Japan. Each side sought world domination. 100 million people from over 30 countries participated in the war. It is the deadliest conflict in human history. The US did not enter the war until Japan attacked the Pearl Harbour in 1941. In retaliation, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The Allies defeated the Axis. There were 50 to 85 million fatalities most of whom were civilians from the USSR and China. The US emerged from this war as a global superpower. It was the first country to develop nuclear weapons and the only one to have used them in warfare.

After the war, the US helped rebuild Western Europe and Japan. The Soviet Union set up the communist governments in Eastern Europe. The Cold War started between the two blocs. During this war, the US and the former Soviet Union competed in the Space Race. Americans made first human landing on the Moon.

The Korean War of 1950 to 1953 was part of the Cold War between communist and non-communist nations. Supported by the Soviet Union, North Korea invaded South

Korea. The latter was backed by the US and its allies. The war ended in a stalemate. Korea remains divided.

In the Vietnam War of 1959 to 1975, communists backed by North Vietnam, attempted to overthrow South Vietnam government. The former was supported by the Soviet Union and China; and South Vietnam by the US and its Allies. The US withdrew its troops in 1973. In 1975, South Vietnam surrendered. Vietnam became a unified Communist country.

End of the cold war and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 rendered US as the sole global power. Iraq annexed Kuwait but was driven out by the US led coalition.

On 11th September, 2001, the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were attacked. In response, the US started the war on terror in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq 2003. GDP nominal is 29 trillion dollars, the highest, with a per capita value of 85,373 dollars, 6th highest. Gini is 39.4, medium and HDI 0.927, very high.

URUGUAY

Oriental Republic of Uruguay (Demonym: Uruguayan) with Capital: Montevideo has a Population: 3.5 million in an Area: 179,283. Its Languages are Spanish and Portunol and Religion: Christian 60%. Its Currency is Peso.

Uruguay is a country in southeast region of South America. It borders Argentina to the west and southwest; Brazil to the north and northeast; Rio de la Plata to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the southeast. It is part of the Southern Cone region of South America. Its capital is its largest city housing nearly 2 million residents. 88 % of the population is white and population density is 20. Its time is UTC -3.

The area that became Uruguay was first inhabited by hunter-gatherers some 13,000 years ago. Portuguese first established Colonia do Sacramento in 1680. The predominant tribe at the arrival of Europeans was the Charrua people. Other tribes include Guarani and the Chana. The Spanish founded Montevideo as a military stronghold in the early 18th century. It won independence in 828, following a four way struggle between Portugal and Spain, and later Argentina and Brazil. However, it remained subject to foreign influence and intervention throughout the 19th century. A series of economic crises and political repression of the left wing guerrillas in the late 1960s and early 1970s put an end to a democratic period that had begun in the late 19th century. It culminated in the 1973 coup de tat, which established a military dictatorship that persecuted leftists, socialists, and political opponents, resulting in deaths and numerous instances of torture. A civilian government assumed power in

1985. Presently Uruguay is a democratic constitutional republic, with a president as its head of government.

Uruguay ranks among the best in the Americas for its success in democracy, social peace and progress, infrastructure, transparency, e-government, economic freedom, income equality, flow of FDI, per capita income and HDI. It is low in tourism. Its GDP nominal is 76 billion dollars with a per capita value of 21,000 dollars. Its HDI is very high, and time, UTC-3. It is a founding member of the UN, OAS and Mercosur.

UZBEKISTAN

Republic of Uzbekistan (Demonym: Uzbek) with Capital: Tashkent has a Population: 36 million in an Area: 448,978. Its Languages are Uzbek and Russian and Religion: Muslim 96%, Christian 2%. Its Currency is Uzbek Som.

It is a doubly landlocked country in Central Asia. A country is doubly landlocked when it is surrounded only by landlocked countries, requiring the crossing of at least two international borders to reach a coastline. There are only two such countries. The other one is Liechtenstein surrounded by Austria and Switzerland. Uzbekistan is bordered by 5 landlocked countries including Kazakhstan to the north; Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Tajikistan to the southeast; Afghanistan to the south and Turkmenistan to the southwest. Uzbekistan is a part of the Turkic world. 85 % of its population is Uzbek while 2 to 4 % each is Tajik, Kazakh and Russian. The Muslim population is predominantly Sunni. Its population density is 74 and time UTC+5.

Kara Khanid Khanate formed in 840, Khwarazmian Empire in 1077 and Timurid Empire in 1370. This was followed by Uzbek Khanate in 1428, Khanate of Khiva in 1511 and Khanate of Kokand in 1709. It became the Empire of Bukhara in 1785 and Turkestan ASSR in 1918 followed by Uzbek SSR in 1924. It achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. It is a dominant party presidential republic. Its legislature consists of a senate and the legislative chamber.

Its GDP nominal is 93 billion dollars with a per capita value of 3500 dollars and HDI high. It mines 80 tons of gold annually, 7th highest in the world. Its copper deposits rank 10th and uranium deposits 12th in the world. Its uranium production is 7th highest in the world and natural gas production 11th highest with an annual output of 70 billion cubic metres. There are 194 deposits of hydrocarbons in Uzbekistan including significant untapped reserves. Its production of coal, silver and oil too is prominent in the region. Its agriculture employs 27 % of the labour force, though cultivable land is a mere 10 % of the total. It is the 5th largest producer and exporter of cotton. South Korea uses Uzbek cotton to make bank notes.

The economy had suffered after separation from the Soviet Union but recovered after 1995 due to government reforms that emphasized state control, reduction in imports and self-sufficiency in energy. The government claimed a successful Uzbekistan Economic Model which is not reflected in practice. Corruption index of the bureaucracy is the most unfortunate part of the economy. Uzbekistan ranks 175th out of 179 in transparency. Revenue earned from key exports is distributed among a very small circle of the ruling elite. The economic policies repel foreign investment. Conversion of currency is difficult in Uzbekistan. However, the economy is most diversified in the region and is attractive for Chinese partnership.

VANUATU

Republic of Vanuatu (Demonym: Vanuatuan) with Capital: Port Vila has a Population: 350,000 in an Area: 12200. Its Languages are French, English and Bislama and Religion: Christian 93%. Its Currency is Vatu.

It is an island nation in South Pacific Ocean in Melanesia sub region of Oceania. The volcanic archipelago is situated 1700 kilometres east of North Australia. It is 500 kilometres northeast of New Caledonia; east of New Guinea; southeast of Solomon Islands and west of Fiji. It is a **y** shaped archipelago consisting of 83 small islands of volcanic origin spaced by 1300 kilometres between north and south parts. Its time zone is UTC + 11 hours

Spanish were the first Europeans to visit the islands in 1606. Spain claimed the archipelago as part of the colonial Spanish East Indies. In 1880s, France and the United Kingdom claimed parts of the archipelago, and in 1906, they agreed on a framework for jointly managing it as the New Hebrides through an Anglo-French condominium. An independence movement arose in the 1970s, and the Republic of Vanuatu was founded in 1980.

Its GDP per capita nominal is 4000 dollars. Four mainstays of the economy are agriculture, tourism, offshore financial services and raising cattle. There is substantial fishing activity. Exports include copra, kava, beef, cocoa and timber. Imports include machinery and equipment, foodstuffs and fuels. Mining activity is low. Manganese is exported in limited quantity. Economic development is hindered by few exports, vulnerability to natural disasters, and long distances between islands. Vanuatu is far off from major markets and this proves a setback for the economy. It is a tax haven that does not release account information but is now under pressure to adhere to international norms including labour laws. Shipping companies use Vanuatu flag to gain tax benefits. Vanuatu receives foreign aid from Australia and

New Zealand. At independence, it became a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie and the Pacific Islands Forum.

VATICAN CITY

Holy See (Demony: Vaticanian or Vaticano) with Capital: Vatican City has a Population: 764 in an Area: 0.49. Its Languages are Italian and Latin and Religion: Catholicism. Its Currency is Euro.

The Vatican is also a metonym for the Holy See. It is a landlocked independent country, city state, microstate, and enclave within Rome in Italy.

The Holy See dates back to early Christianity and is the principal episcopal see of the Catholic Church, which has approximately 1.329 billion Baptist Catholics in the world as of 2018 in the Latin Church and 23 Eastern Catholic Churches. The independent state of Vatican City, on the other hand, came into existence in 1929 by the Lateran Treaty between the Holy See and Italy, which spoke of it as a new creation, not as a vestige of the much larger Papal States, which had previously encompassed much of Central Italy during 756 to 1870. It is a distinct territory under full ownership, exclusive dominion, and sovereign authority and jurisdiction of Holy See, which maintains the state's temporal power and governance, diplomatic, and spiritual independence. It is the ecclesiastical or sacerdotal monarchical state ruled by the Pope, who is the bishop of Rome and head of the Catholic Church. The highest state functionaries are all Catholic clergy of various origins.

With an area of 49 hectares or 121 acres and a population of 764, it is the smallest state in the world both by area and population. After the Avignon Papacy of 1309 to 1377, the popes have mainly resided at the Apostolic Palace within what is now Vatican City, although at times residing instead in the Quirinal Palace in Rome or elsewhere. Vatican City is a unitary theocratic Catholic elective absolute monarchy. The legislature is named Pontifical Commission. The population density is 1600. Currency is Euro and time zone UTC + 1. Vatican City contains religious and cultural sites. The unique economy is supported by donations from the faithful, by the sale of postage stamps, souvenirs and publications. There are no taxes and items are duty free. The wages and living standards of lay workers are comparable to their counterparts in the main city of Rome

VENEZUELA

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Demonym: Venezuelan) with Capital: Caracas has a Population: 31 million in an Area: 916,445. Its Languages are Spanish and some local dialects and Religion: Christian 93%. Its Currency is Bolivar.

Venezuela is a country on the northern coast of South America. It consists of a continental landmass and many islands and islets in the Caribbean Sea. The continental territory is bordered on the north by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean; on the west by Colombia; on the south by Brazil; on the northeast by Trinidad and Tobago; and on the east by Guyana. Venezuela is among the most urbanised countries in Latin America. The vast majority of its citizens live in the cities of the north and in the capital. 52 % people are multiracial and 44 % white. 80 % are Catholic. Population density is 34 and time UTC-4.

The territory of Venezuela was colonised by Spain in 1522 amid resistance from indigenous peoples. In 1811, it became one of the first Spanish American territories to declare independence and form part of the First Republic of Colombia, the Gran Colombia. It separated as a full sovereign country in 1830. It suffered political turmoil and military rule from 19th to mid-20th century. Since 1957, the country has had a series of democratic governments as an exception where most of the region was ruled by military dictatorships, and the period was characterised by economic prosperity. Since 1998, unrest has prevailed.

Its GDP nominal is 92 billion dollars with a per capita value of 3500 and HDI is medium. It is a developing country having the world's largest known oil reserves and has been among the leading oil exporters. Previously, it was underdeveloped exporter of agricultural commodities such as coffee and cocoa, but oil quickly came to dominate exports and government revenues. The excesses and poor policies of the incumbent government led to the collapse of the entire economy. It struggles with record hyperinflation, shortages of basic goods, unemployment, poverty, disease, high child mortality, malnutrition, severe crime and corruption. Seven million people have fled the country. It was declared to be in default regarding debt payments by credit rating agencies. The crisis has contributed to a rapidly deteriorating human rights situation. It is a charter member of the UN, OAS, Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and Bolivian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA, Mercosur, Latin American Association, LAIA and Organisation of Ibero-American States, OEI.

VIETNAM

Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Demonym: Vietnamese) with Capital: Hanoi has a Population: 101 million in an Area: 329,500. Its Languages are Vietnamese and English and Religion: Buddhist 5%, Christian 5%. Its Currency is Dong.

Vietnam is the easternmost country of South East Asia in Indochina. It borders China to the north; and Laos and Cambodia to the west. It shares maritime borders with Thailand through the Gulf of Thailand, and the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia through the South China Sea. Its largest city is Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon. It is the 15th most populous country in the world. 85 % of the population is Kinh Vietnamese and 86 % people have no religion. The population density is 300 and time UTC+ 7.

Vietnam was inhabited by the Palaeolithic age, with states established in the first millennium BC on the Red River Delta in modern-day northern Vietnam. The Han Dynasty annexed Northern and Central Vietnam under Chinese rule from 111 BC until the first dynasty emerged in 939. Successive monarchical dynasties absorbed Chinese influences through Confucianism and Buddhism and expanded southward to the Mekong Delta, conquering Champa. In the 1880s, the territory fell to France who integrated it into French Indochina as three separate regions. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the nationalist coalition Viet Minh was led by the communist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh. He launched the August Revolution and declared Independence in 1945.

Vietnam went through prolonged warfare in the 20th century. After the Second World War, France reclaimed colonial power in the First Indochina War, from which Vietnam emerged victorious in 1954. As a result of the treaties signed between the Viet Minh and France, Vietnam was also separated into two parts. The Vietnam War began shortly after, between the communist North Vietnam, supported by the Soviet Union and China, and the anti-communist South Vietnam supported by the US. Upon the North Vietnamese victory in 1975, Vietnam reunified as a unitary socialist state under the communist Party of Vietnam in 1976. An ineffective planned economy, trade embargo by the West and wars with Cambodia and China crippled the country further. The Chinese style economic and political reforms of 1986 transformed the system to a socialist oriented market economy and facilitated reintegration into the global economy and politics.

Vietnam is a developing country with a lower middle income economy. It has high corruption, censorship, environmental issues and poor human rights record. GDP nominal is 433 billion dollars with a per capita value of 4316. HDI is high. It is a part of the ASEAN, APEC, CPTPP, NAM, OIF and WTO.

YEMEN

Republic of Yemen (Demonym: Yemeni) with Capital: Sana'a has a Population: 35 million in an Area: 530,000. Its Language is Arabic and Religion: Muslim 99%. Its Currency is Rial.

Yemen is a country in southwest Asia. It is located in the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the northeast. It shares maritime borders with Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. It has a coastline of 2000 kilometres in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Yemen is strategically important due to its location on the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea. 92 % population is Arab and 4 % Somali. 65 % Muslims are Sunni and 35 % Shia. Population density is 65 and time UTC + 3.

In ancient times, Yemen was the home of the Sabaeans, a trading state that included parts of modern day Ethiopia and Eritrea. Later in 275 AD, the Himyarite Kingdom was influenced by Judaism. Christianity arrived in the fourth century, and Islam spread rapidly in the seventh century, with Yemenite troops playing a crucial role in early Islamic conquests. Various dynasties emerged between the 9th and 16th centuries. During the 19th century, the country was divided between the Ottoman and British empires. After the First World War, the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen was established, which became the Yemen Arab Republic in 1962 following a coup. South Yemen became independent in 1967. In 1990, the two Yemen states united to form the modern Republic of Yemen. Ali Abdullah Saleh was the first president of the new republic until his resignation in 2012 in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Since 2011, Yemen has been facing a political crisis, marked by street protests against poverty, unemployment, corruption, and the plan to amend the constitution and eliminate the presidential term limit. Subsequently, the country has been engulfed in a civil war, with multiple entities vying for governance, including the government of President Hadi, the Houthi movement and the Southern separatists. The on-going conflict has had devastating impact on the country.

Yemen is one of the least developed countries in the world. Its GDP nominal is 70 billion dollars with a per capita value of 2000 dollars. HDI is low. It is a member of the Arab League, the UN, NAM and the OIC.

ZAMBIA

Republic of Zambia (Demonym: Zambian) with Capital: Lusaka has a Population: 20 million in an Area: 752,614. Its Languages are English and local dialects and Religion: Christian 98%. Its Currency is Kwacha.

Zambia is a landlocked country at the crossroads of Central, Southern and East Africa. It is typically referred to being in South-Central Africa or Southern Africa. It is bordered by the DRC to the north; Tanzania to the northeast; Malawi to the east; Mozambique to the southeast; Zimbabwe and Botswana to the south; Namibia to the southwest and Angola to the west. The capital is located in the south-central part of Zambia. The population is concentrated mainly around Lusaka in the south and the Copperbelt Province, the core economic hub of the country to the north. Population density is 17 and time is UTC +2.

Originally inhabited by Khoisan peoples, the region was affected by the Bantu expansion of the 13th century. Following European explorers in the 18th century, the British colonised the region into the British protectorate of Barotsiland-North Western Rhodesia and North Eastern Rhodesia towards the end of the 19th century. These were merged in 1911 to form Northern Rhodesia. For most of the colonial period, Zambia was governed by an administration appointed from London with the advice of the British South Africa Company.

In 1964, Zambia became independent of the UK and Prime Minister Kenneth Kaunda became the inaugural president. Kaunda's socialist United National Independence Party (UNIP) maintained power from 1964 until 1991. Kaunda played a key role in regional diplomacy, cooperating closely with the US in search of solutions to conflicts in Southern Rhodesia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia. From 1972 to 1991, Zambia was a one-party state with UNIP as the sole legal political party under the motto, One Zambia, One Nation coined by Kaunda. He was succeeded by Frederick Chiluba of the social-democratic movement for Multi-Party Democracy in 1991, beginning a period of socio-economic development and government decentralisation. Zambia has since become a multi-party state and has experienced several peaceful transitions of power.

Zambia contains abundant natural resources, including minerals, wildlife, forestry, freshwater, and arable land. In 2010, the World Bank named Zambia one of the world's fastest economically reformed countries. Bemba and Tonga are the main ethnic groups. The GDP nominal is 30 billion dollars with a per capita value of 1500 dollars. HDI is 0.584, medium. The Common Market for Eastern and South Africa (COMESA) is headquartered in Lusaka.

ZIMBABWE

Republic of Zimbabwe (Demonym: Zimbabwean) with Capital: Harare has a Population: 17 million in an Area: 390,580. Its Languages are English, Shona and Religion: Christian 84%. Its Currency is Dollar.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It lies between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers. It borders Zambia to the north; Mozambique to the east; South Africa to the south and Botswana to the southwest. The capital and the largest city is Harare, and the second largest is Bulawayo. Shona and Ndebele are its main ethnic groups representing 99 % of the population and 70 % of the Christians are Protestant. The population density is 40 and time UTC + 2.

Beginning in the 9th century, the Bantu people, who would become the ethnic Shona, built the city-state of Great Zimbabwe, which became one of the African trade centres by the 11th century but was abandoned by the mid-15th century. From there, the Kingdom of Zimbabwe was established, followed by the Rozvi and Mutapa empires. The British South Africa Company of Cecil Rhodes demarcated the Rhodesia region in 1890 when they conquered Mashonaland and later in 1893 Matabeleland after the First Matabele War. The Company rule ended in 1923 with the establishment of Southern Rhodesia as a self-governing British colony. In 1965, the white minority government unilaterally declared independence as Rhodesia. The state endured international isolation and a 15-year guerrilla war with black nationalist forces; this culminated in a peace agreement that established de jure sovereignty as Zimbabwe in 1980.

Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in 1980, when his ZANU-PF party won the general election following the end of white minority rule and has remained the country's dominant party since. He was the President of Zimbabwe from 1987, after converting the country's initial parliamentary system into a presidential one. Under his authoritarian regime, the state security apparatus dominated the country and was responsible for widespread human rights violations. From 1997 to 2008 the economy experienced consistent decline and in the later years, hyperinflation. He resigned in 2017 in the wake of a coup that followed a year of protests against his government. Emmerson Mnangagwa has since served as the president. There has been rapid growth after the use of currencies other than the Zimbabwean dollar was permitted.

GDP nominal is 32 billion dollars with a per capita value of 2000 dollars. HDI is medium. Zimbabwe is a member of the UN, the SADC, the AU and the COMESA.

MEMORY AID

The overall world picture becomes more useful by committing names of all nations to

memory. The division of the world into continents is arbitrary as per the book titled **World Order** written by Henry Kissinger in 2014. For the purposes of this book, the world is divided into six continents. These include Asia, Europe, Africa, America, Oceania and Antarctica.

Antarctica has no independent nations. Of the total 197 nations, 54 are in Africa; 47 each in Europe and Asia, 35 in America and 14 in Oceania.

In the memory aid below, countries are grouped. The initial letters of all groups are written in sequence under the continent name. .

The abbreviations below are based on experimentation with children of 5 to 10 years of age. Mostly, they learnt all names bit by bit in a year.

AFRICA (54)

EMSCC MDCL BMCCC

There are 32 countries going around the periphery of Africa. Then there are 16 landlocked countries. The remaining 6 nations include 2 island nations in the Atlantic and 4 more in the Indian Ocean.

The list of 32 peripheral countries starts with Egypt in the north east corner of Africa and moves anticlockwise towards the west through 5 countries along the southern Mediterranean shore up to Morocco. Next, there are 20 more countries in western Africa from Mauritania to South Africa along the eastern Atlantic shore. Moving onto the Indian Ocean, there are 4 countries from Mozambique to Kenya. Lastly, there are three more countries along the Red Sea including Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan.

West of Sudan, there are four land locked countries. Jumping to the south, two nations are contained within South Africa with three more to its north. Then there are 4 countries in the Lakes Area and another 3 in the centre. 2 island nations in Atlantic Ocean and 4 more in the Indian Ocean bring the total to 54.

E is the first letter in the 14 letter key EMSCC MDCL BMCCC appearing under the continent name. It represents ELTAM with Egypt as the starting point for further movement to the west. Similarly, the next letter M in the list is the lead letter for MSGGG. Let us start with E and go up to the last letter C as per the sequence.

ELTAM-Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco

MSGGG-Mauritania, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry

SLIGT BN-Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria

CEG-Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon

CDANS- Congo, DR Congo, Angola, Namibia, South Africa

MTKS- Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia

DES- Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan

CNMB- Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso

LE- Lesotho, Eswatini

BZZ- Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia

MBRU- Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda

CSE- Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia

CS- Cape Verde, Sao Tome & Principe

CMSM- Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius

EUROPE (47)

PLNEN CSRM SSTCA

Starting with Portugal in the southwest, we move towards northeast along countries appearing big up to Poland. North of Poland are the Baltic States followed by Scandinavia. Next, we cover the Island Nations and return to the Low Countries followed by the Czech Republic and its neighbours. We now move to Switzerland and its neighbours before moving to Russia and its neighbours. Next, are the seven countries resulting from break-up of Yugoslavia followed by countries of southern Europe. Finally landlocked and island microstates are taken into account.

PSFGP- Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Poland

LLE- Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia

NSFD- Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark

EII- England Ireland, Iceland

NBL- Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg

CSH- Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary

SLA- Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria

RUB- Russia, Ukraine, Belarus

MRB- Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria

SCBK- Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo

SMM- Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia

TAGI-Turkey, Albania, Greece, Italy

AMSV- Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City

MC- Malta, Cyprus

ASIA (47)

YSIJ KGPM MPVC

We start with the Arabian Peninsula and then move to Central Asia. This is followed by countries from Georgia to Afghanistan. Next, we account for the SAARC countries followed by Indo-China, South East Asia and East Asia respectively.

YOU-Yemen, Oman, UAE

SQBK-Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait

ISL- Iraq, Syria, Lebanon,

JIP- Jordan, Israel, Palestine

KTUTK- Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan

GAAIA- Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan

PMSINBB- Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh,

MTS- Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore

MBE- Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor, Brunei

PTJ- Philippines, Taiwan, Japan

VLC- Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia

CMNS-China, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea

AMERICA (35)

CBC VBG BSA

It is relatively easy to start with North America and then move to the South American landmass. Next is the Central American Isthmus followed by the Caribbean.

CAM- Canada, America, Mexico

BUA- Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina

CPEC- Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia

VGS- Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam

BP- Bolivia, Paraguay

GENHCP- Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama

BCJHDB- Belize, Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Bahamas

SSS- St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines

ABDGT- Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago

OCEANIA (14)

AMKM

Starting with the bigger countries, smaller island countries are listed.

ANFP- Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea

MS- Marshal Islands, Solomon Islands

KTV- Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

MNPST- Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tonga

TERRITORIES

AUSTRALIA

Coral Sea Island Territory

Coral Sea Islands are a large Australian territory. They are located northeast of Australia, off the Great Barrier Reef. With no population, they are spread over an area as big as 780,000 square kilometres. This figure is close to the total Pakistan area of 803,940 square kilometres. Australia has an area of 7,686,850 square kilometres. So these islands are nearly 10% of the Australian area. No capital is specified for this territory.

Other Australian Territories

Ashmore and Cartier Islands are an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean at the edge of the Continental Shelf. They are 320 kilometres off the North West coast of Australia, almost south from the Indonesian island of Rote. The islands are

unpopulated. They are spread over an area of 352 square kilometres. No capital is specified for this territory.

Christmas Islands are an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean, south of Java. They have a population of 2000 in an area of 135 square kilometres. The capital of Christmas Islands is named as The Settlement.

Cocos Islands are located in the Indian Ocean, south of Sumatra. These have a population of 1000 in an area of 14 square kilometres. The residents of these islands are predominantly Muslim by religion. No capital is specified for this small territory.

Heard Island and McDonald Islands are far away from Australia. They are located at 52S latitude and 72E longitude. This position is almost 4000 kilometres south west of the western city of Perth; at some 2/3rd distance from Madagascar to Antarctica. The islands are unpopulated due to being volcanic. Their area is 372 square kilometres. No capital is specified for this territory.

Norfolk Island is located east of Brisbane and north of New Zealand. It has a population of 2000 in an area of 35 square kilometres. Its capital is Kingston.

CHINA

Parcel Islands are situated in South China Sea halfway between Vietnam and Philippines. They are also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan. With no population, they have an area of 352 square kilometres. No capital is specified for the islands.

DENMARK

Greenland is located east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago between Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. It has a population of 60,000 and is the largest island of the world with an area of 2,166,086 square kilometres. Its capital is Nuuk.

Faeroes are located in North Atlantic Ocean, north of UK and southeast of Iceland. They support a population of 50,000 in an area of 1400 square kilometres. Their capital is Torshavn.

FRANCE

Overseas Regions

French Guiana is situated in northern part of the South American mainland. Its population is 150,000 in an area of 90,000 square kilometres. Its Capital is Cayenne.

Guadeloupe is situated in eastern Caribbean Sea. It has a population of 400,000 in an area of 1780 kilometre. Its capital is Basse-Terre.

Martinique is located in the Eastern Caribbean. It has a population of 400,000 in an area of 1079 square kilometres. Its capital is Fort-de-France.

Mayotte is located in Mozambique Channel. It has a population of 260,000 in an area of 373 square kilometres. Its capital is Dzaoudzi.

Reunion is in the Indian Ocean, East of Madagascar. It has a population of 883,000 in an area of 2551 square kilometres. Its capital is St-Denis.

Mayotte became in a region in 2011 and the remaining 4 in 1946.

Overseas Collectivities

French Polynesia is east of Fiji. It has a population of 200,000 in an area of 3265 square kilometres. The capital is Papeete.

St Pierre and Miquelon are on south east coast of New Foundland in Canada. Their population is 6000 in an area of 242 square kilometres. The capital is St-Pierre.

Wallis & Futuna are in the South Pacific; southwest of Tuvalu; east of Fiji and southwest of Tonga. The capital is Mata-Utu.

There are 2 more small Collectivities namely **St Martin** and **St Bartheleme**.

Overseas Territories

French Southern and Antarctic Lands are a number of islands stretching from Mozambique Channel islands namely Bassas da India, Europa, and Tromelin up to Antarctica continent. Their population is 300 in an area of 440,000 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

Special Status

Clipperton Island is a coral atoll 1000 kilometre west of Nicaragua, in the Pacific Ocean. It has no population in an area of 6 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

New Caledonia is west of Fiji. The population is 300,000 in an area of 19058 square kilometres. The capital is Noumea.

Glorioso Islands are located in Mozambique Channel. Their coordinates are roughly 11S47E and they are between Mayotte and Madagascar. There is no population in an area of 5 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

MOROCCO

Western Sahara is a disputed territory between neighbours but held by Morocco. Its population is 300,000 in an area of 266,000 square kilometres. 99% of the population is Muslim. The capital is Laayoune.

NETHERLANDS

Aruba is 29 kilometres north of Venezuela, in South Caribbean. Its population is 100,000 in an area of 193 square kilometres. The capital is Oranjestad.

Netherland Antilles are north of Venezuela. Their population is 200,000 in an area of 800 square kilometres. The capital is Willemstad.

NEW ZEALAND

Cook Islands are in south Pacific, east of Tonga. Their population is 20,000 in an area of 293 square kilometres. The capital is Avarua-on-Raratunga.

Niue is in south Pacific, east of Fiji. Population is 2000 in an area of 158 square kilometres. The capital is Alofi.

Tokelau is in south Pacific, north of Samoa and northwest of Cook Islands. Their population is 2,000 in an area of 10 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

NORWAY

Bouvet Island is at 55S3E position. It is 3,000 kilometres southwest of South Africa. There is no population in an area of 50 square kilometres. No capital is specified for this territory.

Jan Mayen is 600 kilometres northeast of Iceland. Normally, Svalbard and Jan Mayen are combined. There is no population in area 373 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

PORTUGAL

Azores are in North Atlantic, west of Portugal. Their population is 250,000 in an area of 2247 square kilometres. The Capital is Ponta Delgada.

Madeira is in North Atlantic, west of Morocco. It has a population of 250,000 in an area of 794 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

UK

Anguilla is in East Caribbean. Its population is 15,000 in an area of 155 square kilometres. Its Capital is The Valley.

Akrotiri and Dhekelia are referred to as Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) of Akrotiri and Dhekelia. They are considered British Overseas Territory on the island of Cyprus. Their population is 15,000 in an area of 155 square kilometres. No separate capital for UK is specified.

Bermuda is in Atlantic Ocean, east of Miami. Its population is 60,000 in an area of 54 square kilometres. The capital is Hamilton.

British Indian Ocean Territory is halfway between Tanzania and Indonesia. Its population is 2000 in area 60 square kilometres. The Capital is Diego Garcia

Cayman Islands are situated in the Caribbean Sea. They are south of Cuba and north of Jamaica. Their population is 60,000 in an area of 259 square kilometres. The Capital is George Town.

Channel Islands are in English Channel. Jersey is the largest and it is situated off the coast of Normandy. Guernsey is another Channel Island. Their population is 150,000 in an area of 200 square kilometres. Capitals are St Helier (Jersey) and St Peter (Guernsey).

Falkland Islands are in South Atlantic, east of Argentina. Their population is 2000 in an area 12170 square kilometres. The capital is Stanley

Gibraltar is in West Mediterranean Sea, between Spain and Morocco. Its population is 35,000 in an area of 7 square kilometres. The capital of Gibraltar is synonymous with the territory name.

Isle of Man lies in west of UK in Irish Sea. It is northwest of Liverpool. Its population is 85,000 in an area of 572 square kilometres. The capital is Douglas.

Montserrat is in the Caribbean Sea. Its population is 6,000 in an area of 100. The capital is Plymouth.

Pitcairn Islands are in the Pacific, east of French Polynesia. Their population is 70 in an area of 45 square kilometres. The capital is Adamstown.

St Helena is in South Atlantic, west of Angola. Its population is 5,000 in an area of 122 square kilometres. Its capital is Jamestown.

South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands are in South Atlantic near Antarctica. They are unpopulated and their area is 4,000 square kilometres. The capital is King Edward Point.

Turks and Caicos Islands are in East Caribbean. Their population is 35,000 in an area of 430 kilometres. The capital is Grand Turk.

Virgin Islands are situated at the Caribbean and Atlantic Junction, east of Puerto Rico. Their population is 30,000 in an area of 153 square kilometres. The capital is Road Town.

USA

American Samoa is north east of Fiji. They have a population of 60,000 in an area of 197 square kilometres. The capital is Pago Pago.

Guam is east of Philippines and north of Micronesia. Its population is 170,000 in an area of 541 square kilometres. Its capital is Agana.

Navassa Island is in the Caribbean, south of Cuba and northeast of Jamaica. It is unpopulated and has an area of 352 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

Northern Mariana Islands are in the Pacific, east of Philippines. Their population is 55,000 in an area of 477 square kilometres. The capital is Saipan.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated US territory in the east Caribbean. It has a population of 3.7 million in an area of 9,104 square kilometres. Its capital is San Juan.

Virgin Islands are located at the junction of the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. They are east of Puerto Rico. Their population is 100,000 in an area of 352 square kilometres. The capital is Charlotte Amalie.

Wake Island is an unorganised and unincorporated US territory in the West Pacific. It is 2500 kilometres east of Guam; 4000 kilometres west of Honolulu; and 3000 kilometres southeast of Tokyo. It is used for refuelling of aircraft. It has a population of 100. The only residents are military units of some countries. It has an area of 2 square kilometres. No capital is specified.

ADDITIONAL TERRITORIES

Antarctica

It is at the South Pole. Its territory has been divided among a number of countries including UK, USA, Australia, Norway, France and New Zealand. Its population is 1100 in an area of 14 million square kilometres. No capital is specified.

Spratly Islands

These lie in West Pacific. They are 2500 kilometre east of Guam; 4000 kilometres west of Honolulu and 3000 kilometres south east of Tokyo. They are used for refuelling of aircraft. No capital is specified.

The area is divided among countries including China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Taiwan. The residents are military units of these countries. The islands are spread over an area of 400,000 square kilometres and are a source of constant dispute among the countries. Shipping lanes; and, oil and gas deposits are the bones of contention not only among neighbours but also superpowers. Even Brunei claims an exclusive economic zone in these islands.

SUMMARIES

NATIONS BY POPULATION

The world population is unevenly distributed among nations. Presently, it is slightly in excess of 8 billion. Population figures are continuously changing and updating of the information is necessary. However, for the purposes of general awareness, rounded off figures are good enough. The information below spans all 197 nations. The nations have been grouped together in descending order of population.

The Billionaires

With a population of 1.45 billion, India is at top of the list, representing as much as 17.7% of the world population. At 1.42 billion, China occupies the second position accounting for 17.3% of the world population. Together the two nations make 35% of the world total. With a population growth rate of almost 1 % per annum versus 0.4% of China, India recently overtook China.

The Hundred Million Group

12 nations fall in this group. The USA has 345 million residents, representing 4% of the world total. Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil have 283, 251, 232, and 212 million people respectively. Among the 54 countries of Africa, every 4th African is a Nigerian. Bangladesh, Russia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Japan, Egypt, Philippines, DR Congo and Vietnam have 173, 145, 132, 130, 124, 117, 116, 109 and 101 million residents respectively. The top 16 nations have a combined population of roughly 5.34 billion, representing 65% of the world total.

The Eight Figure Group

From here onwards, the population is given as a range between the top and the bottom figure considering that the accurate figure is not important and that only some estimate would suffice.

Vietnam, DR Congo, Turkey, Iran, Germany and Thailand: 98 to 70 million. Thailand occupies **20th** position in the list.

UK, France, Italy and Tanzania: 68 to 60 million

South Africa, Myanmar, Kenya, South Korea, and Colombia: 59 to 51 million. The combined population of the top **29** countries is nearly 6 billion, representing 76% of the world total.

Spain, Uganda, Argentina, Algeria, Sudan, Ukraine and Iraq: 47 to 40 million.

Afghanistan, Poland, Canada, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Canada, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Peru, Angola, Malaysia, Mozambique, Ghana and Yemen: 39 to 30 million.

Nepal, Venezuela, Madagascar, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, North Korea, Australia, Niger, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso and Mali: 29 to 20 million. Mali is at the **60th** position in the list.

Romania, Malawi, Chile, Kazakhstan, Zambia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Syria, Netherlands, Senegal, Cambodia, Chad, Somalia and Zimbabwe: 19 to 15 million

Guinea, Rwanda, Benin, Burundi, Tunisia, Bolivia, Belgium, Haiti, Cuba, South Sudan, Dominican Republic, Czech Republic, Greece, Jordan, Portugal, Azerbaijan and Sweden: 13 to 10 million. The combined population of the top 91 countries is 7.5 billion, representing 96% of the world total.

The Millionaires

Honduras, UAE, Hungary, Tajikistan, Belarus and Austria: 9.9 to 9.0 million

Papua New Guinea, Serbia, Israel, Switzerland, Togo and Sierra Leone: 8.9 to 8 million

Laos and Paraguay: 7.3 and 7.1 million respectively.

Bulgaria, Libya, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Kyrgyzstan, Salvador and Turkmenistan: 6.9 to 6.0 million.

Singapore, Denmark, Finland, Congo, Slovakia, Palestine, Norway (120th position), Oman, Palestine, Costa Rica, Liberia: 5.9 to 5.1 million.

Ireland, Central African Republic, New Zealand, Mauritania, Panama, Kuwait, Croatia (130th position), Moldova and Georgia: 4.9 to 4 million.

Eritrea, Uruguay, Bosnia, Mongolia, Armenia and Jamaica: 3.5 to 3 million

Qatar, Albania (140th position), Lithuania, Namibia, Gambia, Botswana, Gabon, Lesotho, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Guinea Bissau: 2.9 to 2 million;

Latvia, Bahrain (150th position), Equatorial Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, Estonia, East Timor, Mauritius, Cyprus and Eswatini (158th position): 1.9 to 1.2

Hundreds of Thousands

Djibouti, Fiji, Comoros, Guyana, Bhutan, Solomon Islands, Macao, Montenegro Luxembourg, Suriname, Cape Verde, Maldives, Malta (171st position): 988,000 to 441,000 population.

Brunei, Belize, Bahamas, Iceland, Vanuatu, Barbados, Sao Tome, Samoa, St Lucia, Kiribati, Grenada, St Vincent, Tonga (184th position): 437,000 to 105,000

Tens of Thousands

Seychelles; Antigua and Barbuda, Andorra, Dominica, Marshall Islands, St Kitts and Monaco (191st position): 98,000 to 39,000 residents

Liechtenstein, San Marino, Palau, Tuvalu and Nauru: 38,000 to 10,000

The One and Lonely

Vatican City: 801 residents (197th position)

NATIONS WITH HIGH POPULATION GROWTH

Starting from the top, the high population growth rate countries are listed up to Pakistan only. Bahrain leads the world with a growth rate of 4.7 % per annum, followed by Niger with 3.9 %, Equatorial Guinea with 3.8 %, Angola with 3.4 %, Burundi with 3.2 %, and Chad, DR Congo, Tanzania, Somalia and Mali each with 3.1% growth per annum.

11th to 20th positions go to Zambia and The Gambia with 3.0 % per annum; Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Malawi with 2.9 %; Senegal, South Sudan and Benin with 2.8 %, and Palestine and Qatar with 2.7% growth per annum.

Number 21 to 30 include Kenya, Liberia, Guinea, Jordan and Nigeria at 2.6 %; and Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau and Togo with 2.5 % growth per annum.

Zimbabwe, Yemen and Rwanda each have a population growth rate of 2.4 % per annum. Eritrea and Gabon have 2.3 % and Ghana 2.2 %. Egypt and Pakistan have a growth rate of 2% per annum with the latter occupying 38th position in the table.

TOP 50 NATIONS BY AREA

This information below contains ranking of nations by area in a descending order. The area figures are not given and only the order of merit is covered.

Top 10 countries include Russia, Canada, China, USA, Brazil, Australia, India, Argentina, Kazakhstan and Algeria.

DR Congo, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Indonesia, Sudan, Libya, Iran, Mongolia and Peru are the next ten.

The 21 to 30 list includes Chad, Niger, Angola, Mali, South Africa, Colombia, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Mauritania and Egypt.

Tanzania, Nigeria, Venezuela, Namibia, Pakistan, Mozambique, Turkey, Chile, Zambia and Myanmar are next in the list.

41 to 50 ranks go to France, Afghanistan, Somalia, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ukraine, Botswana, Madagascar, Kenya and Yemen.

Vatican City is the smallest.

CURRENCIES

More than 70 currencies are in use among the 197 nations of the world and their dependent overseas territories. They are given below.

Currencies used by Multiple Countries

Dollar is used by as many as 31 nations. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brunei, Canada, Dominica, East Timor, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Kiribati, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, St Kitts, St Lucia, St Vincent, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, USA and Zimbabwe.

Dollar is also used in overseas territories of some other nations whose currency is not dollar. Dollar has local names like Australian Dollar and East Caribbean Dollar.

Euro is used by a total of 25 nations. Out of the 27 EU members, 19 are in the monetary union called euro zone or euro area. They use euro as their currency and sole legal tender. This union includes Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. Some non-EU nations too use euro. These include Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City. Kosovo and Montenegro have also adopted euro unilaterally.

Franc is used by 22 nations. 9 of them call it frank. They are Burundi, Comoros, Congo Kinshasa, Djibouti, Guinea, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Rwanda and Switzerland. **CFA Franc** is used by 13 nations. These include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

Dinar is used by 9 nations. These include Algeria, Bahrain, Bosnia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Macedonia and Palestine.

Peso is in use among 9 nations including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guinea Bissau, Mexico, Philippines and Uruguay.

Rupee is used by 8 nations. These include India, Indonesia, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles and Sri Lanka.

Rial is used in Iran, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Shilling is the currency in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. **Pound** is used in Egypt, Lebanon, South Sudan and UK, and **Dirham** in Morocco and UAE.

Ruble is the currency in Belarus and Russia and **Birr** is used by Eritrea and Ethiopia. **Won** is used both in North Korea and South Korea and **Colon** in Costa Rica and El Salvador. **Kroner** is used in Iceland and Sweden and **Krone** in Norway and Denmark.

Kwacha is used in Malawi and Zambia and **Leu** in Moldova and Romania. **Manat** is used in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan and **Som** in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan;

Currencies used by Single Countries

Afghani: Afghanistan

Baht: Thailand

Balboa: Panama

Bolivar: Venezuela

Boliviano: Bolivia

Cedi: Ghana

Cordoba: Nicaragua

Dalasi: Gambia

Dobra: Sao Tome

Dong: Vietnam	Dram: Armenia	Emalageni: Swaziland
Escudo: Cape Verde	Forint: Hungary	Gourde: Haiti
Guarani: Paraguay	Guilder: Suriname	Hryvnia: Ukraine
Kip: Laos	Kina: Papua NG	Koruna: Czechia
Kuna: Croatia	Kwanza: Angola	Kyat: Myanmar
Lari: Georgia	Lek: Albania	Lempira: Honduras
Leone: Sierra Leone	Lev: Bulgaria	Lira: Turkey
Loti: Lesotho	Metical: Mozambique	Naira: Nigeria
Ngultrum: Bhutan	Ouguiya: Mauritania	Paanga: Tonga
Pula: Botswana	Quetzal: Guatemala	Rand: South Africa
Real: Brazil	Riel: Cambodia	Ringgit: Malaysia
Shekel: Israel	Sol: Peru	Somoni: Tajikistan
Sucre: Ecuador	Taka: BD	Tala: Samoa
Tanga: Kazakhstan	Tugrik: Mongolia	Vatu: Vanuatu
Yuan: China	Yen: Japan	

INTERGOVERNMENTAL **ORGANIZATIONS**

In this section, most if not all intergovernmental organisations are listed. Relatively more vital ones are covered in detail relevant to their importance in the world. For the sake of brevity, some organisations are merely listed. Less known regions are given priority as they are important but are generally ignored. All efforts have been made to group the organisations systematically but some parts remain arbitrary.

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations (UN)

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Commonwealth of Nations

Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)

Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI)

Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)

Organisation of Turkic States (OTS)

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

Australia, New Zealand US Treaty (ANZUS)

Australia, UK, US Treaty (AUKUS)

Five Eyes

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Group of Seven (G20)

Group of 7 (G7)

Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO)

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)

UNITED NATIONS (UN)

Principal Organs

The United Nations (UN) is a diplomatic and political international organisation whose stated purposes are to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and serve as a centre for harmonising the actions of nations. It is the world's largest international organisation. The UN is headquartered in New York City in the USA, but with certain extraterritorial privileges. It has other offices in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. Its office in The Hague houses the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The UN was established after World War Two with the aim of preventing future world wars. It succeeded the League of Nations, which was characterised as ineffective. On 25th April 1945, representatives of 50 nations met in San Francisco to draft the UN charter, which took effect on 24th October 1945 and the UN began operations. The UN's objectives include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development, and upholding international law. The UN mission included the provision of primarily unarmed military observers and lightly armed troops charged with primarily monitoring, reporting, and confidence-building roles. It was complicated by the Cold War tensions.

At its founding, the UN had 51 member states; the number has now shot up to 93, including almost all of the world's sovereign states. UN membership grew significantly following widespread decolonisation in the 1960s. Since then 80 former colonies have gained independence, including 11 trust territories that had been monitored by the Trusteeship Council. By the 1970s, the UN's budget for economic and social development programmes vastly exceeded its spending on peacekeeping. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, the UN shifted and expanded its field operations, undertaking a wide variety of complex tasks.

The UN has five active principal organisations; the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice and the UN Secretariat. The sixth organ, the Trusteeship Council has been inactive since 1994. The UN's chief administrative officer is the secretary general elected for a five year term. The organisation is financed by assessed and voluntary contributions from its member states.

The UN, its officers, and its agencies have won many Nobel Peace Prizes, though other evaluations of its effectiveness have been mixed. Some commentators believe the organisation to be an important force for peace and human development, while others have called it ineffective, biased, and corrupt.

Specialised Agencies

The UN system includes a multitude of specialised agencies, funds and programmes listed below. Additionally, non-governmental organisations may be granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and other agencies.

Food and Agriculture Organisation - FAO

International Civil Aviation Organisation- ICAO

International Fund for Agricultural Development- IFAD

International Labour Organization-ILO

International Maritime Organization-IMO

International Monetary Fund - IMF

International Telecommunications Union - ITU

UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization-UNESCO

UN Industrial Development Organisation- UNIDO

UN Tourism- World Tourism Organisation

Universal Postal Union- UPU

World Health Organisation- WHO

World Intellectual Property Organisation – WIPO

World Meteorological Organisation –WMO

World Bank Group. It includes International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Development Association (IDA), and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

The OIC is an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1969. It consists of 57 member states, 48 of which are Muslim majority. The organisation claims to be the collective voice of the Muslim world and works to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony. 56 members are also UN members. The only exception is Palestine. Bosnia, CAR, Thailand, Russia and Northern Cyprus are observer states. Some organisations and groups too participate as observers.

The African members include Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda.

The Asian members are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria (suspended), Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

Albania is the European member while Guyana and Suriname represent America.

COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

The Commonwealth of Nations, often simply referred to as the Commonwealth, or the British Commonwealth, is an international association of 56 member states, the vast majority of which are former territories of the British Empire. They are connected through the use of the English language and historical-cultural ties.

The Commonwealth is headquartered in London. Its Secretariat deals with intergovernmental relations and its Foundation is responsible for non-governmental matters among member states.

its member states include Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Eswatini, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, UK, Vanuatu and Zambia. Majority of the members are small states, almost half of them being developing states located on islands.

The Commonwealth dates back to the first half of the 20th century with the decolonisation of the British Empire through increased self-governance of its territories. It was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations through the Balfour Declaration at the 1926 Imperial Conference, and formalised by the UK through the Statute of Westminster in 1931. The current Commonwealth of Nations was formally constituted by the London Declaration in 1949, which modernised the community and established the member states as free and equal.

The British Monarch is the Head of the Commonwealth. He is king of 15 member states, known as the Commonwealth realms. They are scattered across three continents; nine in North America, five in Oceania and one in Europe. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and the UK.

36 member states of the Commonwealth are republics and 5 have different monarchs. Member states have no legal obligations to one another, and their mutual links are voluntary. Citizenship of a Commonwealth country affords benefits in some member countries, particularly in the UK. Commonwealth countries are represented to one another by high commissions rather than embassies. The Commonwealth Charter defines their shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as promoted by the quadrennial Commonwealth Games.

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE (OIF)

OIF is an international organisation representing countries and regions where: French is a lingua franca or customary language; or a significant proportion of the population are francophone, French speakers; or there is a notable affiliation with French culture. Its headquarters is in Paris.

The organisation comprises 88 member states and governments; of these 54 states and governments are full members, 7 are associate members and 27 are observers. The term Francophonie with a lower case f or Franco sphere, often capitalised in English also refers to the global community of French-speaking peoples, comprising a network of private and public organisations promoting equal ties among countries where French or Belgium played a significant historical role, culturally, militarily, or politically.

The modern organisation was created in 1970. Its motto is equality, complementarity and solidarity. Starting at a smaller scale, it is now a global organisation. Its numerous branches cooperate with its member states in the fields of culture, science, economy, justice and peace.

Its members include Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso (suspended), Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, DR Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, France, Gabon (suspended), Greece, Guinea (suspended), Guinea

Bissau, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Laos, Mauritania, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, North Macedonia, Niger (suspended), Romania, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

ORGANISATION OF IBERO-AMERICAN STATES (OEI)

OEI is an international organisation made up of 23 member states of Iberophone nations in Europe, and the Americas, as well as one member in Africa. The members include sovereign states of Ibero-America and the Iberian Peninsula as well as Equatorial Guinea. All members are Portuguese and Spanish speaking nations, in addition to Andorra, which is predominantly Catalan speaking. The organisation does not include all Iberophone world nations. The headquarters is in Madrid, Spain.

The members are Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

COMMUNITY OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE COUNTRIES (CPLP)

CPLP is an international organisation and political association of Lusophone nations across five continents, where Portuguese is an official language. It was founded in 1996 in Lisbon almost two decades after decolonisation of the Portuguese Empire. The CPLP operates as a privileged multilateral forum for the mutual cooperation of the governments, economies, NGOs and peoples of Lusophonia.

It consists of 9 member states including Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, and East Timor. Another 33 countries are its associate observers. There are also 4 observer organisations including the EU, G7, Ibero-American Summit, and Ibero-American Organisation. Macau in China is interested in membership but is not granted.

ORGANISATION OF TURKIC STATES (OTS)

The OTS is an intergovernmental organisation comprising all but one of the internationally recognised Turkic sovereign states; Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey and Uzbekistan, while Hungary and Turkmenistan are observers. Northern Cyprus too has been admitted as observer but it is recognised by Turkey only. OTS was founded in 2009 with the aim to promote cooperation among Turkic people. Its secretariat is in Istanbul.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), also called North Atlantic Alliance is an intergovernmental military alliance of 32 member states, 30 European and 2 North American. In alphabetical order, the members include Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK and USA.

Established in the aftermath of the Second World War, the organisation implements the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington DC on 4th April, 1949. NATO is a collective security system. Its member states agree to defend each other against attacks by third parties. During the Cold War, NATO operated as a check on the threat posed by the Soviet Union. The alliance remained in place after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, and has been involved in military operations in the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. The organisation motto is Mind unfettered by deliberation. Its strategic concepts include deterrence.

Its main headquarters are in Brussels, Belgium, while its military headquarters are near Mons in Belgium.

NATO recognises Bosnia, Georgia and Ukraine as aspiring members. Enlargement of NATO has led to tensions with non-member Russia, one of the 18 additional countries participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Another 19 countries are involved in institutionalised dialogue programme with NATO. .

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND UNITED STATES SECURITY TREATY (ANZUS TREATY)

The ANZUS Treaty is a 1951 collective security agreement initially formed as a trilateral agreement between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. It requires the parties to maintain their capacity to resist armed attack. It emphasises mutual consultation on security matters in the Pacific and provides that an armed attack on any of the three members would be dangerous to the others, and that each should act to meet the common threat. It set up a committee of foreign ministers that can meet for consultation.

The treaty was one of the series that the United States formed in the 1949-1955 era as part of its collective response to the threat of communism during the Cold War. Since 1986, New Zealand has maintained a nuclear-free zone in its territorial waters. It is partially suspended from ANZUS as the United States maintains an ambiguous policy whether or not the warships carry nuclear weapons and operates numerous nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines; however, New Zealand resumed key areas of the ANZUS treaty in 2007.

In late 2012, the United States lifted a 26-year old ban on visits by New Zealand warships to US Department of Defence and US Coast Guard bases around the world. ANZUS was overshadowed in late 2021 by AUKUS, a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It involves cooperation in nuclear powered submarines that New Zealand did not support. Australia and New Zealand are poles apart in terms of the way they see the world.

AUSTRALIA, UK, US (AUKUS) TREATY

AUKUS, also styled as Aukus is a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK and the USA intended to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific that is secure and stable. Announced in 2021, the partnership involves two lines of effort referred to as pillars. Pillar 1 focuses on Australia acquiring nuclear-powered attack submarines and the rotational basing of US and UK nuclear powered attack submarines in Australia. Pillar 2 entails collaborative development of advanced capabilities in undersea capabilities; quantum technologies; artificial intelligence and autonomy; advanced cyber, hypersonic and counter hypersonic capabilities; innovation and information sharing. The focus on military capability, distinguishes it from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing that also includes New Zealand and Canada.

The partnership was necessitated due to larger institutions failing to act in Indo-Pacific with the requisite priority for common purpose and speed. It became necessary to create deterrence in the region. China views the partnership as a risk to regional peace as it is a response to its emerging superpower status.

The partnership spelled the end of a French-Australian submarine deal. France considered the partnership a stab in its back following Australia's cancellation of the 56 billion euro deal without notice, ending the development of deeper mutual strategy, and recalled its ambassadors from Australia and USA in 2021. The new Australian government is trying to rebuild relations with France.

FIVE EYES (FVEY)

The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an Anglophone intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These countries are parties to the multi-lateral UK-USA Agreement, a treaty for joint cooperation in signals intelligence. Informally, Five Eyes can refer to the group of intelligence agencies of these countries.

The origins of the FVEY can be traced to informal secret meetings during WW2 between British and American code-breakers, before the US formally entered the war. The alliance was formalised in the post-war era, specifically through the UKUSA Agreement in 1946. As the cold war deepened, the intelligence sharing arrangement became formalised under the ECHELON surveillance system in the 1960s. This was developed by the FVEY to monitor the communications worldwide. The FVEY expanded their surveillance capabilities during the course of the war on terror, with much emphasis placed on monitoring the World Wide Web. The alliance has grown into a robust global surveillance mechanism, adapting to new challenges such as international terrorism, cyber threats, and regional conflicts.

The alliance's activities, often shrouded in secrecy, have occasionally come under scrutiny for their implications on privacy and civil liberties, sparking debates and legal challenges. In the late 1990s, the existence of ECHELON was disclosed to the public, triggering a debate in the European Parliament, and to a lesser extent, the United States Congress and British Parliament. It was revealed by 2010 global surveillance disclosures that FVEY had been spying on one another's citizens.

Five Eyes is among the most comprehensive espionage alliances. The intelligence shared is not restricted to signals intelligence (SIGINT) and often involves defence intelligence as well as human intelligence (HUMINT) and geospatial intelligence (GEOINT). Five Eyes remains a critical element in the intelligence and security

landscape of each member country, providing a strategic advantage in understanding and responding to global events.

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 38 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum whose member countries describe themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices; and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members.

Its members include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, and USA.

The majority of OECD members are high-income economies ranked as very high in the HDI, and are regarded as developed countries. Its headquarters is in Paris, which housed its predecessor organisation, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation. It is an official UN observer.

GROUP OF TWENTY (G20)

The Group of Twenty (G20) is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 sovereign countries, the EU and the AU. It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation and sustainable development.

Its members include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK, USA, EU, and AU.

It was founded in 1999 in response to several world economic crises. . It is convened at least once a year with summits involving heads of government or state, along with the EU's European and the European Central Bank. Other governments' international organisations and NGOs are invited to attend the summits, some permanently. AU joined G20 in 2023.

The group has been criticised for its limited membership, lack of enforcement powers and undermining of existing international institutions. Summits are often met with protests, particularly by anti-globalisation groups.

GROUP OF SEVEN (G7)

The Group of Seven (G7) is an intergovernmental political and economic forum consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and USA; additionally, the EU is a non-enumerated member. It is organised around shared values of pluralism, liberal democracy, and representative government. G7 members are the major IMF advanced economies.

It was founded at Washington DC IN 1973 as Library Group. Originating from an ad hoc gathering of finance ministers, the G7 has since become a formal, high profile venue for discussing and coordinating solutions to major global issues, especially in the areas of trade, security, economics and climate change. Each member's head of government or head of state, along with the EU's Commission President and European Council President, meet annually at the G7 Summit; other high ranking officials of the G7 and the EU meet throughout the year. Representatives of other states and international organisations are often invited as guests, with Russia having been a formal member as part of the G8 from 1997 until its expulsion in 2014.

The G7 is not based on a treaty and has no permanent secretariat or office. It is organised through a presidency that rotates annually among the member states, with the presiding states setting the group's priorities and hosting the summit. While lacking a legal or institutional basis, the G7 is widely considered to wield significant international influence. It has catalysed or spearheaded several major global initiatives, including efforts to combat AIDS, provide financial aid to developing countries, and address climate change through the 2015 Paris Agreement. However, the group has been criticised by observers for its allegedly out-dated and limited membership, narrow global representation and ineffectualness.

ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)

Abbreviated as OPEC, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is an intergovernmental organisation of 13 nations. It was founded in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq in 1960 by five countries including Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. In 1965, the headquarters was shifted to **Vienna**, the capital of Austria. Indonesia left OPEC with Qatar following in 2019. The latter has 25 billion barrels. Oil reserves of the current members are listed in descending order.

Venezuela with 300 billion barrels tops the list, followed by 267 billion barrels of Saudi Arabia. Iran holds 158 billion barrels and Iraq 143 billion. Kuwait is 5th with 101 billion and UAE is 6th with 98 billion barrels. Libya and Nigeria hold 48 billion and 37 billion barrels respectively. Algeria has 12 billion, and Angola and Ecuador 8 billion each. Gabon holds 2 billion and Equatorial Guinea 1 billion barrels.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANISATION (ECO)

Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) was the revised shape of RCD. Pakistan, Iran and Turkey revived the original Regional Cooperation for Development established in 1964. Its membership expanded to include Afghanistan and six Muslim states of the former Soviet Union.

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

The CIS is a regional intergovernmental organisation in Eurasia. It was formed following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It has nine member states; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and

Uzbekistan, with Turkmenistan as associate member. It encourages cooperation in economic, political and military affairs and has certain powers relating to the coordination of trade, finance, law-making, and security, including cross-border crime prevention.

The treaty has its origin in the Soviet Armed Forces; which was replaced in 1992 by the United Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States., and was then itself replaced by the successor armed forces of the respective independent states.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION (CSTO)

The CSTO is an intergovernmental military alliance in Eurasia consisting of six post-Soviet states; Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The treaty has its origin in the Soviet Armed Forces; which was replaced in 1992 by the United Armed Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States., and was then itself replaced by the successor armed forces of the respective independent states.

Similar to NATO, the treaty establishes that an aggression against one signatory would be perceived as an aggression against all. It affirms the desire of the member states to abstain from the use or threat of force. Signatories are prohibited from joining other military alliances.

AMERICAS

Organization of American States (OAS)

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)

Union of South American Nations (USAN)

Integration of South America (PROSUR)

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

The Bolivarian Alliance for Peoples of Our America (ALBA)

Andean Community

Central American Integration System (SICA)

Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO)

ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

OAS is an international organisation founded in 1948 to promote cooperation among its member states within the Americas.

Headquartered in Washington DC, the OAS is a multilateral regional body focused on human rights, electoral oversight, social and economic development and security in the Western Hemisphere. Out of the total 35 states in Americas, 33 are OAS members. Only Cuba and Nicaragua are excluded

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is an advisory association of nations centred on the Caribbean Basin. It was formed with the aim to promote mutual trade, transport, tourism and response to natural disasters.

It was established in Cartagena, Colombia in 1994 with the Secretariat located at Port-of-Spain in Trinidad and Tobago. It has 25 members, 10 associate members and 28 observers. Its members are Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, ST Vincent and the Grenadine, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

The associate members include the islands of the Caribbean that form overseas territories of independent nations and the observer states comprise some independent nations of South America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM or CC)

The Caribbean Community is a political and economic union of 14 nations and a dependency. It was established in 1973 by four members with headquarters in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana. It holds the UNGA observer status. Its activities involve coordination of economic policies and development plans; institution of special projects for less developed countries; operation as a regional market, and handling regional trade disputes.

In 2001, the Conference signed a revised treaty that cleared the way for transforming the common market CARICOM into CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Caribbean Court of Justice is also envisaged by members.

The members include Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St Kitts and Nevis; St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The list thus comprises 12 English speaking nations, a British territory Montserrat, the Dutch speaking Suriname and French speaking Haiti.

Its associate members include 5 British overseas territories including Anguilla; Bermuda; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos islands.

The observers include 3 constituent countries of the Netherlands namely Aruba; Curacao; and Saint Martin; Colombia; Dominican Republic; Mexico; Venezuela; and the unincorporated US territory of Puerto Rico.

SOUTHERN COMMON MARKET (MERCOSUR)

The Southern Common Market, commonly known by Spanish abbreviation Mercosur and Portuguese Mercosul, is a South American trade bloc, established by the Treaty of Asuncion in 1991 with headquarters in Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. Its members include Argentina; Brazil; Paraguay and Uruguay. Venezuela was originally a member but was suspended in 2016. The remaining 7 South American countries are its associate members. These include Bolivia; Chile; Colombia; Ecuador; Guyana; Peru and Suriname. New Zealand and Mexico have the observer status in Mercosur.

UNION OF SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS (USAN)

The Union of South American Nations (USAN) sometimes also referred to as the South American Union, abbreviated in Spanish as UNASUR and in Portuguese UNASUL, is an intergovernmental regional organisation. It was set up by President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela to counter US influence in the region. It once included all twelve South American countries; as of 2019, most had withdrawn.

Andean Community and Mercosur are customs unions. In 1999, the two organisations talked of a merger.

The UNASUR Constitutive Treaty was signed in 2008 in Brasilia, with its headquarters planned to be located in Quito, Ecuador. In 2010, Uruguay became the ninth state to ratify the treaty. In 2011, it became a legal entity during a meeting of the foreign ministers in Ecuador where the foundation was laid for the Secretariat Headquarters. USAN was created on the pattern of the EU and it contemplated to create South American Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Between 2018 and 2019, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador and Uruguay withdrew from the Treaty. Brazil re-joined in 2023. In 2019, to counter dictatorship of Venezuela, a new group PROSUL was advanced in a Chilean summit. While it excluded Venezuela; Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Guyana and Suriname were invited to join.

FORUM FOR THE PROGRESS AND INTEGRATION OF SOUTH AMERICA (PROSUR)

PROSUR is an initiative to replace USAN. It was founded in 2019 to coordinate public policies in defence of democracy, independent economy and social agenda. It is a right wing response to the left wing UNASUR. Its members are Argentina; Brazil; Chile; Colombia; Ecuador; Guyana; Paraguay; Peru and Suriname. Bolivia and Uruguay are observers in PROSUR. The participation of Chile is suspended at the moment. The administrative centre is rotational, the current one being Asuncion.

COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES (CELAC)

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States is a regional bloc created in 2011 in Caracas, Venezuela. It consists of 33 members.

CELAC was created to deepen Latin American integration and to reduce the significant influence of the US on the politics and economics of Latin America. It is seen as an alternative to OAS that had been created to counter Soviet influence. Cuba was suspended from the OAS in 1962 and has since refused to join. It is a member of the CELAC. Brazil suspended its participation in 2020 but re-joined when De Silva became the president. 33 members include the entire American continent excluding USA and Canada.

BOLIVARIAN ALLIANCA FOR THE PEOPLES OF OUR AMERICA (ALBA)

ALBA is an intergovernmental organisation based on the idea of political and economic integration of Latin American and Caribbean countries. It has 10 members including Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Nicaragua, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadine, and Venezuela. Suriname was admitted as a guest country in 2012 and is pending full membership. Haiti, Iran and Syria are observers. Honduras and Ecuador are former members.

Founded initially by Cuba, and Venezuela in 2004, ALBA is associated with socialist and social democratic governments wishing to consolidate regional economic integration based on a vision of social welfare, bartering and mural economic aid. Its headquarters is in Caracas.

ANDEAN COMMUNITY

The Andean Community is a free trade area with the objective of creating a customs union comprising the Andean states of South America. The trade bloc was founded in 1969 as Andean Pact by five countries, with headquarters in Lima, the capital of Peru. Later, Chile left the Pact. In 1996 the name was changed to Andean Community. Its present members are Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile are its associate members. Spain is in observer status.

CENTRAL AMERICAN INTEGRATION SYSTEM (SICA)

SICA is an economic and political organisation of Central American states founded in 1993, headquartered in El Salvador. Its specific targets are regional peace, political freedom, democracy and economic development.

It is an institutional framework of Regional Integration in Central America, created by the states of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Subsequently Belize and Dominican Republic too joined it.

Mexico, Chile and Brazil became regional observers. ROC, Spain, Germany, Georgia and Japan became extra-regional observers. SICA has a standing invitation to participate in sessions of the UNGA as observer.

Four countries Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua experiencing political, cultural and migratory integration have formed a group, the Central American Four or C-4, which has introduced common internal borders and the same type of passport. Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, and the Dominican Republic subsequently joined the C-4 for economic integration.

AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY ORGANISATION (ACTO)

The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation is an international organisation aimed at the promotion of sustainable development of the Amazon Basin. Its member states are Bolivia, Brazil, Colombo, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. The treaty was signed in 1978 and Its permanent secretariat was established in Brasilia in 2002.

ASIA AND PACIFIC

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

East Asia Summit (EAS)

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP)

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

The Association of South East Asian Nations, ASEAN was created in 1967. It has 10 members namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The Association thus has three

members each from Sinic, Buddhist, and Muslim cultures. One of the members is Christian. Its headquarters is in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The primary objectives are to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, and to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and rule of law. It engages with other supranational entities in the region and beyond, and is a major partner of the UN, SCO, PA, GCC, MERCOSUR, CELAC and ECO. Its success has become the driving force for APEC and RECP. The ASEAN + 6 groups comprise the ten ASEAN countries plus 6 other countries in the Asia-Pacific region including Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand.

EAST ASIA SUMMIT (EAS)

The East Asia Summit is a regional forum held annually by leaders of initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Oceanian regions, based on the ASEAN plus Six mechanism. Membership expanded to 18 countries including Russia and the United States at the Sixth EAS in 2011. Since its establishment, ASEAN has held the central role and leadership in the forum. EAS meetings are held after the annual ASEAN leaders meetings. It plays an important role in the architecture of Asia-Pacific region. The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005.

Members include Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United States and Vietnam.

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RECP)

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP) is a free trade agreement among the Asia-Pacific countries of Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It is the largest trade bloc in history.

Signed in 2020, RECP is the first free trade agreement among the largest economies in Asia, including China, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea. It is headquartered in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The RECP was conceived in 2011, signed in 2020 and took effect in 2022. It is expected to eliminate 90 % tariffs on imports. China is poised to leave the US behind in economic and political affairs in the region.

ASIA PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC)

The APEC is an inter-governmental forum for 21 member economies in the Pacific Rim that promotes free trade throughout the Asia Pacific region. The member economies include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, USA and Vietnam. ASEAN, PIF and Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) are observers. The host is invited in G20 meeting.

Following the success of ASEAN's series of post-ministerial conferences launched in the mid-1980s, APEC started in 1989, in response to the growing interdependence of Asia-Pacific economies and the advent of regional trade blocs in other parts of the world; it aimed to establish new markets for agricultural products and raw materials beyond Europe. Headquartered in Singapore, APEC is recognised as one of the highest-level multilateral blocs and oldest forums in the Asia-Pacific region, and exerts significant global influence.

The heads of government of all APEC members except Taiwan attend an annual meeting. The location of the meeting rotates. Leaders mostly dress in host nation's dress. Taiwan is represented by a minister.

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM (PIF)

The PIF is an inter-governmental organisation that aims to enhance cooperation among countries and territories of Oceania, including formation of a trade bloc and regional peacekeeping operations. It was founded in 1971 as the South Pacific Forum SPF, and changed to PIF in 1999 to include north as well. It is a UNGA observer. Its members include Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. UN, EU and USA are among its associate members. Secretariat seat is in Suva, Fiji.

The mission of the forum is to enhance economic and social wellbeing of members. Australia and New Zealand are larger and wealthier, and they are significant aid donors and markets for other members. Military, police and civilian peacekeeping force of the forum is mainly Australian and New Zealander and is part of regional peacekeeping and stabilisation operations in other states like Solomon Islands in 2003 and Nauru in 2004-9. Such regional efforts are mandated by the Biketawa Declaration of 2000. In 2021, Palau left the forum. FSM and Nauru too left. Kiribati left but re-joined.

The larger Pacific Community functions mainly to promote international development by providing technical and scientific advice and funding development projects, and does not consider security issues or function as a trade bloc.

QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)

The Quad is an intergovernmental security forum grouping Australia, India, Japan and the United States. It is maintained by talks between member countries. Quad was initiated in 2007. Joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale were conducted titled Exercise Malabar. The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power.

It lasted till 2008 and was re-established in 2017. The partnership is known formally as Quad. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is a misnomer not used officially by the Quad governments, noting its nature as a diplomatic, not security partnership.

The Quad ceased in 2008 following the withdrawal of Australia, due to its ambivalence over the growing tensions between the US and China in the Indo Pacific region. During 2017 ASEAN Summit in Manila, the leaders of the member countries agreed to revive the Quad partnership in order to counter China militarily and diplomatically in the Indo Pacific region, particularly in the South China Sea. China formally protested diplomatically to the Quad dialogue calling it Asian NATO.

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

The SAARC is a regional, intergovernmental organisation and geopolitical union of states in South Asia. Its member states are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It was founded in Dacca in 1985. Its secretariat is in Kathmandu, Nepal. It promotes economic development and regional integration. It maintains diplomatic relations with UN and EU. However, its meetings are suspended due to tensions between India and Pakistan.

BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC)

The BIMSTEC is an intergovernmental organisation of seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These are the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.

Fourteen priority sectors of cooperation have been identified and several BIMSTEC centres have been established to focus on those sectors. A BIMSTEC free trade agreement similar to SAARC is under consideration. Leadership is rotated in alphabetical order. The permanent secretariat is at Dhaka, Bangladesh.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a regional, intergovernmental, political, and economic union comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The council's main headquarters is located in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. The Charter of the GCC was signed in 1981, formally establishing the

institution. All current member states are monarchies including three constitutional monarchies, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait; two absolute monarchies including Saudi Arabia and Oman, and one federal monarchy, the United Arab Emirates. There have been discussions of future membership of Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen. The Peninsular Shield Force is the military arm of the GCC formed in 1984.

EUROPE

European Union (EU) including Euro Zone and European University Institute (EUI)

Schengen Area

Council of Europe (CoE)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Nordic Council

Benelux Union

Union for the Mediterranean (Ufm)

The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

Bucharest Nine (B-9)

Visegrad Group (V-4)

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation (Eurocontrol)

European Patent Organization (EPO)

Western European Union (WEU)

ECAC

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The European Union is a supranational political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. It is named Union Europea in Spanish, Europan Unioni in Finnish, Union européenne in French, Unione Europea in Italian and Europese Unie in Dutch.

The EU has often been described as a *sui genesis* political entity (without precedent or comparison) combining the characteristics of both a federation and confederation. The EU includes the nations listed below in alphabetical order:

Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden

The EU has headquarters in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. It represents almost 6 % of the world population. All EU states except Bulgaria have a very high HDI. Its cornerstone, the Customs Union, paved the way for establishing an internal single market based on standardised legal framework and legislation that applies in all member states in those matters, where the states have agreed to act as one. EU policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the internal market; enact legislation in justice and home affairs, and maintain common policies on trade, agriculture, fisheries and regional development. Passport controls have been abolished for travel within the Schengen Area. Through the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Union has developed a role in external relations and defence. It maintains permanent diplomatic relations throughout the world and represents itself at the UN, WTO, G7 and G20. Due to its global influence, the EU has been described by some scholars as an emerging superpower.

The EU was established through the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, and later the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Its beginnings can be traced to the Inner Six states (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany) at the start of modern European integration in 1948, and to the Western Union, the International Authority for Ruhr, the European Coal and Steel Community, which were established by treaties. These increasingly amalgamated bodies grew, with their legal successor the EU, both in size through the accession of a further 22 states from 1973 to 2013, and in power through acquisitions of policy areas. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The UK became the only member state to leave the EU in 2020; while ten more countries are aspiring or negotiating to join it.

Euro Zone

The euro zone or euro area is an economic and monetary union of the 19 EU members that have fully implemented it. They use euro as their currency and sole legal tender. Euro is used by a total of 25 nations. All EU members except Bulgaria,

Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden have adopted euro. Some non-EU nations too use euro. These include Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City, Kosovo and Montenegro.

European University Institute (EUI)

The EUI is an international postgraduate and post-doctoral research-intensive university and an intergovernmental organisation with judicial personality, established by its founding member states to contribute to cultural and scientific development in the social sciences, in a European perspective. Its main campus is located in the hills above Florence in Fiesole, Italy.

The EUI is funded by its contracting states, the European Union (Erasmus+), and its own revenue, drawn from competitive research funding, partnership with public and private actors, and executive education.

One of the flagships of the EUI is its doctoral programmes. Each year it welcomes 130 new PhD researchers at its departments of Economics, History and Civilisation, Law, and Political and Social Sciences. It also offers a selection of master's programmes and executive education courses. The student and early-stage researcher body is international with scholars representing more than 90 countries.

Since 1993, the Institute has been home to the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSC), which focuses on the critical issues facing Europe, fostering problem-centred research and serving as a bridge between academia and policymaking. In 2017, the EUI established the School of Transnational Governance (STG) with its graduate, fellowship, and executive education programmes.

SCHENGEN AREA

The Schengen Area is an area encompassing 29 European countries that have officially abolished border controls at their mutual borders. Being an element within the wider area of freedom, security and justice policy of the EU, it mostly functions as a single jurisdiction under a common visa policy for international travel purposes. The area is named after the 1985 Schengen Agreement and the 1990 Schengen Convention, both signed in Schengen, Luxembourg.

Of the 27 EU members, 25 are part of the Schengen Area. Bulgaria and Romania, the newest members, only have air and maritime borders open, with land border controls remaining in place. The only EU states that are not part of the Area are

Cyprus and Ireland. Cyprus is legally obliged to join but Ireland maintains an opt-out and operates its own visa policy.

All member states of the EU Free Trade Association, namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland have signed agreements to be part of the Area. Moreover four microstates, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and Vatican City are de facto members of the Area due to their size and impossibility of maintaining active border controls. Almost 2 million people commute to work across the internal EU border each day. The countries within the Schengen Area include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (CoE)

The Council of Europe is an international organisation with the goal of upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Founded in 1949, it brings together 46 member states. It is headquartered in Strasbourg, France.

Its members include all European countries except Russia, Belarus, Kosovo and the Vatican City. In addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia too are its members.

The organisation is distinct from the EU, although people confuse the two because EU adopted the original flag of the Council. Also, all EU members come from CoE. It cannot make laws but can enforce agreements. The Council has two bodies; the Committee of Ministers comprising foreign ministers of each member state and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), composed of members of national parliaments of each member state.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

The OSCE is a regional security oriented intergovernmental organisation, comprising member states in Europe, North America, and Asia. Its mandate includes issues such as arms control, human rights and social freedom.

It had origins in 1975. It was a forum for discussion between Western and Eastern blocs. Most of its 57 members are in Europe. It is concerned with early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Its members include Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, UK, USA and Uzbekistan.

NORDIC COUNCIL

The Nordic Council is the official body for formal inter-parliamentary Nordic cooperation among the Nordic countries. Formed in 1952, it has representatives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as from the autonomous areas of the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Aland. The representatives are members of parliament in their country or area. The council holds ordinary sessions each year and usually one extra session per year with a specific theme.

In 1971, the Nordic Council of Ministers, an intergovernmental forum, was established to complement the council. Both departments are involved in various forms of cooperation with neighbouring areas in Northern Europe; including the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, the Benelux countries and the Baltic States.

BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, LUXEMBOURG UNION (BENELUX UNION)

The Benelux Union or Benelux is a politico-economic union and formal international intergovernmental cooperation of three neighbouring states in Western Europe; Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The name is a blend word formed from joining the first few letters of each country's name and was first used to name the customs agreement that initiated the union in 1944. It is now used more generally to refer to the geographic, economic, and cultural grouping of the three countries.

The Benelux is an economically dynamic and densely populated region. Its 30 million residents represent 5.6 % of the European population. Its GDP is 8 % of the EU GDP. 37 % of the EU cross-border workers work in the Benelux. 35,000 Belgian citizens cross the border daily to work in Luxembourg and another 37,000 in Netherlands. 12000 Dutch and 1000 Luxembourg residents work in Belgium. About 80 % of Benelux population speaks Dutch. Its headquarters is in Brussels and its presidency is held by the three countries in turn for a period of one year.

UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (Ufm)

The Union for the Mediterranean (Ufm) is an intergovernmental organisation of 43 member states from Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. It was founded in 2008 to reinforce Euro-Mediterranean, Euro-med that was set up in 1995. Its secretariat is located in Barcelona, Spain.

The Union has the aim of promoting stability and integration throughout the Mediterranean region. It focuses on 6 sectors;

- Business development and employment
- Higher education and research
- Social and civil affairs
- Energy and climate action
- Transport and urban development
- Water, environment and blue economy

The Union includes the 27 EU members including those not on the Mediterranean. In addition, there are 16 Mediterranean partner countries from North Africa, Western Asia and Southern Europe. These include Albania, Algeria, Bosnia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

ORGANISATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC)

The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is a regional international organisation focusing on multilateral political and economic initiatives

aimed at fostering cooperation, peace, stability and prosperity in the Black Sea region. It traces its origin to 1992, when leaders of 11 countries gathered in Istanbul and signed the Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement. BSEC Headquarters, the Permanent International Secretariat of the organisation was established in Istanbul in 1994 and is called BSEC PERMIS.

With the entry into force of its charter in 1999, BSEC acquired international legal identity and was transformed into a full-fledged regional economic cooperation. With the accession of Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia, the number of members increased to 13.

BUCHAREST NINE (B-9)

The Bucharest Nine or Bucharest Format (B9 or B-9) is an organisation founded in 2015 in Bucharest, Romania, at the initiative of the President of Romania and President of Poland. Its members are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Its appearance was mainly a result of a perceived aggressive attitude from Russia following the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its posterior intervention in eastern Ukraine, both in 2014. All members of the B-9 were either part of the former USSR or members of the defunct Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.

VISEGRAD GROUP (V4)

The Visegrad Group, also known as Visegrad Four or the V4 is a cultural and political alliance of four Central European countries; the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The alliance aims to advance cooperation in military, economic, cultural, and energy affairs, and to further their integration with the EU. All four states are also members of the EU, the NATO and the B9.

The alliance traces its origins to the summit meetings of leaders of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland held in the Hungarian castle town of Visegrad in 1991. Visegrad was chosen as the location for the summits as an intentional allusion to the medieval Congress of Visegrad between John I of Bohemia, Charles I of Hungary, and Casimir III of Poland in 1335.

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia became independent members of the alliance, increasing the number of members to four. All four members joined the EU in 2004.

AFRICA

African Union (AU)

South African Development Community (SADC)

Community of East and South Africa (COMESA)

Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

AFRICAN UNION (AU)

The African Union (AU) is a continental union of 55 member states on the continent of Africa. The bloc was founded in 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched in Durban, South Africa in 2002. It replaced OAU, established in 1963. The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states. In 2023, the AU was admitted as a member in G20 on the pattern of the EU. 54 member states of the AU are UN members while Western Sahara is disputed.

SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

The South African Development Community (SADC) is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana. SADC was established in 1992 replacing SADCC that was formed in 1980. Its members include Angola, Botswana,

Comoros, DR Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Burundi has requested to join.

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA)

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is a regional economic community in Africa with twenty one member states, stretching from Tunisia to Eswatini. COMESA was formed in 1994, replacing a Preferential Free Trade Area which had existed since 1981. Nine of the member states formed a free trade area in 2000. These include Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Rwanda and Burundi joined the FTA in 2004, the Comoros and Libya in 2006, Seychelles in 2009, and Tunisia and Somalia in 2018.

Apart from the 16 members listed above, the remaining five members are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tunisia, DR Congo and Eswatini.

Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Namibia and Angola were members but left between 1997 and 2004.

In 2008, COMESA agreed to an expanded free trade zone including members of two other African trade blocs, the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). COMESA is also considering a common visa scheme to boost tourism.

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa. It is headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria. Its members include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Morocco has requested to join.

The stated goal of the organisation is to achieve collective self-sufficiency by creating a single large trade bloc.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Development Programme (UNDP)

UN Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Criminal Court (ICC)

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Seabed Authority (ISA)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

International Bureau of Education (IBE)

International Bureau of Weights and Measures (IBWM)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Non Aligned Movement (NAM)

Group of 77 (G-77)

Group of 24 (G24)

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (Eurocontrol)

European Patent Office (EPO)

Western European Union (WEU)

Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS)

South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone

Arab League (AL)

General Arabia Free Trade Area

Indian Ocean Commission

Antarctic Commission

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Bank of the South

East African Community (EAC)

Community of Sahel Saharan States

African Petroleum Producers Association

Niger Basin Authority

African Continent Free Trade Area

Arab Maghreb Union

Warsaw Pact - Defunct

Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) - Defunct

SE Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) - Defunct

Baltic Entente – Defunct

EPILOGUE

The enhancements in telecommunications and travel facilities have reduced the world to a global village and some awareness of the world has become a necessity. This book is aimed at providing the reader with some information that can facilitate him in dealing with foreign environments.

The aim behind this book is only to promote general awareness without expecting anything in return. The information may be freely used individually or collectively by all members of the human race for academic, professional or even commercial

purposes. Readers are requested to share the information to the maximum. This document is particularly intended for use by less privileged students.

The book is expected to meet different responses from readers. Some may read only names of the nations and that is not bad effort. Some might go through the entire book and a number might add to the contents or research on some of its areas in varying degrees. Some of the contents would require updating on regular basis.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The Universe

The universe is all of space, time and some other contents. These include galaxies, black holes, matter, energy, you, me and everything. Galaxies have stars and some stars have planets revolving around them. Planets may have moons as their satellites. The universe also has meteors commonly known as shooting stars. Then there are small planets in the solar system. Those in the inner part of this system are called asteroids; the ones in the outer part are known as comets.

The universe is big and it is expanding. Light years are used to measure its dimensions. A light year represents the distance travelled by light in a year. The speed of light is 300 kilometres per second. The vastness of the universe can be perceived by its diameter of nearly 500 billion light years. There is some evidence to prove the existence of universes in excess of one. In such a case a term like multiverse might be introduced in future.

The Earth Position in the Solar System

The Sun is an average size star. With its planets, asteroids and comets the setup is called the solar system. The earth is the third planet between Venus and Mars. It has a moon as its satellite. Some of the other planets have two or more moons while certain others have no moons.

Shape of the Earth

The earth is an oblate spheroid in shape. In real terms, the earth has deformities as a sphere, but for general purposes it can be considered a perfect sphere.

Rotation

The earth rotates from west to east completing one orbit every 24 hours. The rotation is around a straight line called the Axis of Rotation. It is an imaginary line passing through centre of the earth. Its end points are called poles. They are North Pole and South Pole. Accordingly, the axis of rotation is also called Polar Axis. While the Axis itself is imaginary, Poles are real points on surface of the earth.

Revolution

The earth revolves around the sun. One revolution is completed in 365 days and nearly 6 hours. The sun light at a time falls over half of the globe and that part has day time. The other half is night. The plane of rotation is inclined to the plane of revolution by 23.5 degrees. The concept of planes is better understood by imagining two roads at start of a bridge. One of them is level and another descending at 23.5 degrees. As a result of this tilt, on 21st June, North Pole starts to receive sunlight. This is called summer solstice for the northern hemisphere. The light continues coming for 6 months. So it has 6 month long day. On 21st December, the light stops. It is called winter solstice for the northern hemisphere. 6 month long night follows. North and south poles have mutually opposite reception of light and thus opposite seasons. On 21st March and 21st September, days and nights are equal. These days are called spring equinox and autumn equinox respectively. Equinox means equal nights. The spring equinox of north is the autumn equinox of south and vice versa.

Direction

To reach a destination, travel should be in correct direction. Knowledge of direction is thus vital for movement over the earth.

East is used as the reference direction. It is the direction in which the earth rotates. West is the direction opposite to east. While facing east, north is the direction to left and south the direction to right. Normally top of the map represents north. North, East, South and West are called Cardinal Directions. North East, South East, South West and North West are termed as Quadrantal Directions.

There exists a universal system of reporting direction. North is the start direction annotated as 000 degrees. Direction is measured clockwise from North. 10 degrees is 010 and 30 degrees is 030. East is 090, South 180, West 270 and North 360 or

000. Direction 215 is 35 degrees clockwise from south and direction 315 is a north westerly direction. 359 is a direction 1 degree west of north. The diagram showing all directions is called compass rose. Direction is written in three digits to preclude error of adding figures to right. For instance direction 10 degree is written as 010. Under this arrangement there is no chance to write it as 100.

Great Circle

While direction is basic to movement, the next important element in navigation is distance. The shortest distance on a sphere is travelled by moving along a Great Circle. It is an imaginary circle on surface of the earth which has the same centre and radius as the earth itself. Only one great circle can be drawn between two points unless they are diametrically opposed. All great circles cut the earth into two equal parts. Each is called a hemisphere. A great circle by the name Equator divides the earth into northern and southern hemispheres.

Small Circle

Any circle on surface of the earth which is not a great circle is called a Small Circle.

Equator

Equator is the Great Circle which is at right angles to the polar axis. It is an imaginary east west circular line. It generally passes through Borneo and Sumatra islands in Indonesia. In Africa, it goes through Kenya, Uganda, the two Congos and Gabon. In America it passes through Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador. Equator is used as the reference line for measuring latitude. It is the zero latitude line. The North Pole is 90N latitude and South Pole is 90S latitude.

Parallels of Latitude

Parallels of latitude are small circles parallel to the equator. Sometimes they are only called parallels. The 38th parallel is the dividing line between North Korea and South Korea.

Meridians

Meridians are the half great circles joining the two poles. The meridian passing through Greenwich in England is used as the reference line for measuring longitude. Greenwich Meridian is also called Prime Meridian. It is the zero longitude line. Longitude can be up to 180 degrees east or 180 degrees west. Prime Meridian runs through UK, France, Spain, Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and Gabon.

180E or 180W line is the same and it is called International Date Line. Coming south from North Pole along 180E meridian, the line runs through Russia, USA, Kiribati and New Zealand. It has been adjusted to have one date within each nation.

Latitude Longitude System

To find position on the earth, the latitude helps in locating how far north or south of the equator a place is situated. For instance 45N latitude means that the place is halfway between the Equator and the North Pole.

Longitude helps in finding how far east or west of Greenwich a place is located. For example, 90E means some halfway between the UK and New Zealand.

Latitude is written before longitude to standardise position reporting. Lat before long, never wrong, is used as a memory aid. Zero point of the earth is Zero N latitude and Zero E longitude. It lies west of the island nation Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea. 45N90E position is in Kazakhstan. Islamabad airport is 33N76E. Position in degrees of latitude and longitude is good enough for general knowledge. Together, the latitude and longitude are called Coordinates.

For more accuracy in position reporting, minutes and seconds are used. These are minutes and seconds of distance, not time. There are 60 minutes in a degree and 60 seconds in a minute. A degree is roughly 110 Kilometres in length; a minute is less than 2 kilometres, and a second nearly 30 meters.

While travelling from one place to another, sometimes change of latitude and change of longitude is required. The two changes are called chlat and chlong respectively. Suppose you travel from 40N040E position to 80N085E. You go from 40N latitude to 80N latitude. The difference between 40 and 80 is 40. The direction of change is north. Chlat is thus 40N. The change in longitude is 45 to the E. Chlong is thus 45E.

Distance

Three units of distance are in use; kilometre, statute mile and nautical mile. Most countries use kilometres. Statute miles are used in USA and UK. Nautical miles are used in aviation, navy and army. A kilometre is defined as the earth circumference divided by 40000. It equals 3280 feet.

Statute means law. Under the law, a mile was adopted in UK. It equals 5280 feet. A nautical mile is length of 1 minute of arc at the earth surface. It equals 6080 feet. There are thumb rules for conversion of distance from one unit to another. 5 statute miles equal 8 kilometres. Half of kilometres plus 4% equal nautical miles. 100 kilometres are thus 54 nautical miles. 66 nautical miles roughly equal 76 statute miles.

Time Zones

Interaction among people of the world necessitated a standard time. As time changes mostly with longitude, Greenwich Time was used as the reference time. It is called Greenwich Mean Time abbreviated as GMT. For a number of reasons the name was later changed to Coordinated Universal Time. The abbreviation for the new name is UTC, instead of the expected CUT.

The earth completes one rotation around its axis generally in 24 hours. As the earth rotation is from west to east, the places lying east of Greenwich see the sun before those lying to its west. One rotation means 360 degree change of longitude. So 15 degree longitude represents one hour. Going east of Greenwich, one hour is added to UTC for every 15 degrees to find the local time. Going west from Greenwich, one hour is subtracted for every 15 degrees longitude for the purpose. 180W and 180E lines coincide to become a single line close to New Zealand. This line is called International Date Line. Crossing this line from west to east, the date is reduced by one. Crossing east to west, it is increased by one. Pakistan is 75E longitude. Hence 5 hours are added to the UTC to obtain local time. When it is 1 AM in England, it is 6 AM in Pakistan.

The world is divided into 24 time zones in east west direction. Omitting letters I and O, they are given alphabetical identity starting from Greenwich. Eastern Longitudes are divided by 15 and rounded off to the nearest whole number. This means that up to half of 15 goes to previous zone and more than half to next zone. The number is allotted an alphabet. Western longitudes are subtracted from 360 and divided by 15. This is to make the zone identification continuous. The result is divided by 15. Rounding off to the nearest 15 rule applies here too. Pakistan time is Lahore time. Lahore longitude is 75E. 75 divided by 15 is 5. 5th letter being Echo, Pakistan standard time abbreviated as PST is called Echo time. New York is 75W. This number is subtracted from 360. The result in this case is 285. 285 divided by 15 is 17. The letter Quebec represents 17. Greenwich itself is Zulu time.

PST is the local time of Lahore. When the sun is overhead Lahore, Quetta has to wait another 40 minutes for the same position. The real local time at Quetta is 1120 when the PST is 1200 hours.

Some countries adjust their zone time in summers and winters by an hour to save daylight hours. This time is called standard time.

AUTHORS

Malik Mansab Khan belongs to a village namely Pira Fatehal situated in the well-known Salt Range of the Pothohar Plateau. It is located 15 kilometres southwest of Talagang City. He was born in 1949, is married and has three daughters and a son. He served in the air force as an avionics engineer and his duties involved management and supervision of maintenance activities relating to aircraft, radars, missiles and telecommunications. As a group captain, he headed the engineering activities at a Flying Base. In the rank of Air Commodore, he served as the Managing Director Avionics and Radar Factory at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex Kamra. His area of responsibility spanned production and overhauling of avionics equipment including radars.

After retirement, he served as General Manager Shaheen Aerotraders for three years. Since 2014, he, along with his son, has been running his Italian restaurant in the Centaurus Mall, Islamabad.

He actively manages some charitable activities in his village. Sardar Bibi Welfare Trust is named after his mother and is focused on health and education. With assistance from colleagues, an ambulance is now available at Pira Fatehal to convey patients to Talagang, and if required, Islamabad. Apart from the routine medical facilities, cataract eye operations are also performed on senior citizens. As for education, uniforms and books are made available to the needy students free of charge. In addition, counselling is provided to the younger generation on higher education, employment and private business.

Muhammad Rafiq Abdul Aziz hails from Narwala Bungalow, a small town situated 10 kilometres west of Faisalabad city. He was born in 1953, is married and has two sons with a daughter in the middle. He was inducted into 58th General Duties Pilot course in 1972. He graduated as a radar controller and was later moved to General Duties Navigation branch. As a navigator, he mostly flew B 57 bombers and C130 transport aircraft with some flying on Boeing 707 and Fokker F 27. His 3000 flying hours are almost equally divided between bomber and transport flying.

He worked in a Fighter Conversion Unit as Chief Ground Instructor for three years and in the Saudi Air Force Academy as a navigation instructor for an equal length of period. In 1990, he was posted to the Interservices Selection Board for two years as a Deputy President. He qualified the yearlong Air War Course in 1993 and last served in the Air Transport Wing for a year. He took early retirement in 1994 in the rank of Wing Commander and was employed in the Royal Saudi Air Force in the same year, where he served as a navigation instructor till 2004. Subsequently, he briefly served in the Shaheen Air as Station Manager Islamabad Airport and later

PAF Warehouse as the Manager Logistic Administration where he also underwent a Fire Prevention Course of four week duration. Lastly, he served as a Flight Policies and Procedures instructor in Saudi Arabian Airlines from 2006 to 2012.

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END OF THE BOOK
